

**GURU GOBIND SINGH'S DEATH  
AT NANDED :**  
*AN EXAMINATION OF SUCCESSION THEORIES*

**GANDA SINGH**

1972  
GURU NANAK FOUNDATION, BHATINDA DISTRICT,  
FARIDKOT

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First Published 1972

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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Faridkot,  
December 29, 1971

Gurcharan Singh,  
*Secretary,*  
Guru Nanak Foundation,  
Bhatinda District

PDF created by Rajesh Arya - Gujarat

*Published by Sardar Gurcharan Singh, M.A., PES (I), for the Guru Nanak Foundation, Bhatinda District, Faridkot, and printed by J.R. Mangla at the Phulkian Press, Phulkian Marg, Patiala.*

## PREFACE

All over the world and throughout the ages, history of religions has seen the rise of pretenders and false prophets. The multiplicity of gods and goddesses, of the so-called messiahs and their successors, and of spurious '*sants*' and '*gurus*', with pretensions and claims of their followers who preach them up, is a living example of it. This phenomenon is the product of ancient polytheisms with widespread net of exploiting priestly classes whose influence, supported by the vested interestes of the bourgeoisie, on the unsuspecting masses has been deep and strong. The result has been that the schismatic leaders have, for their own glamour and glory, not only misled their simple folk from the right paths but have also tried to undermine the fundamentals of their faiths.

India, in common with other parts of the world, has had its own number of religious pretenders. Even the latest of religions, Sikhism—only five hundred years old—with the Unity and Uniqueness of One formless God as its creed, has not been exempt from them. The lure of the offerings of the devotees freely flowing and the importance of the position of the *Guru* among the Sikhs have led several people to stake pontifical claims. With politics gaining undue weightage from the twenties of this century and the Sikh religious institutions falling into the hands of the politicians, several schismatics going about in the garb of '*Sants*', '*Babas*', etc., have stepped into the vacuum created by the absence of true religious preachers, particularly in the rural areas, and are trying to establish their own '*Guruships*' or *deras*, claiming to be either the successors of Guru Gobind Singh or his *avatars* or incarnations. One or two of them are seeking shelter under the fictitious theory of the supposed resurrection, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, of Guru Gobind Singh under the name of Baba Ajapal Singh of Nabha. The theory, with no

historical basis at all to support it, is in itself meaningless and incredible. However, an attempt has been made in the following pages to examine this and some others in the light of reliable historical evidence.

Lower Mall, Patiala,  
February 26, 1972.

GANDA SINGH



## CONTENTS

1. Guru Gobind Singh in Historical Perspective	9
2. His Last Days	11
3. Personal Succession discontinued— the <i>Granth</i> to be the <i>Guru</i> in Future	13
4. Myth-Making about Guru Gobind Singh	15
5. Historical Record on the Guru's Death at Nanded	18
6. <i>Guru Granth</i> ordained as Guru	26
7. Historical Evidence on Guru's Last Days and Death	41
8. Genealogical Accounts— <i>Gur-pranalian</i>	51
9. Claims of Schismatics	51
10. No Evidence of Balak Singh's relations with Baba Ajapal Singh	54
11. Baba Ram Singh's Faith in <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i>	60
12. Bhai Ganga Singh's Pretentions	63
13. The Ajapal Singh Myth	65
14. Neo-Guruship Doctrine Untenable	66
15. Bhai Kahan Singh's Beliefs	70
16. Beliefs of the Kukas	72
17. Baba Ajapal Singh was not Guru Gobind Singh	74

### APPENDICES

I <i>Rahit Nama</i> , Bhai Nand Lal, 1695-1712	79
II <i>Sri Gur-Sobha</i> , Sainapat, 1711	79
III <i>Guru Daswen Patshah ke joti Jot Samawane ka Prasang</i>	81
IV <i>Parchian Sewa Das</i> , Sewa Das Udasi, 1741	81
V <i>Gur Bilas Patshahi Das</i> , Koer Singh, 1751	83
VI <i>Bansavali Nama</i> , Kesar Singh Chhibbar (1769), 1779	87
VII <i>Mehma Prakash</i> , Sarup Das Bhalla, 1784, 1800	88
VIII <i>Singh Sagar</i> , Bir Singh Ball, 1828	89
IX <i>Bayan-i-Khandan-i-Bedian</i> , Sant Singh, 1865	90
X <i>Hukam-Name</i> ( <i>Baba Ram Singh ji de</i> ), written 1872-1884, compiled by Sant Tehal Singh	91
XI <i>Pothi-Gur Bilas ki</i> , Bawa Sumer Singh, 1873, pub. 1882	93

## **GURU GOBIND SINGH'S DEATH AT NANDED : AN EXAMINATION OF SUCCESSION THEORIES**

### **1. GURU GOBIND SINGH IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The two historical facts that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs, died at Nanded in the Deccan, now in Maharashtra, on October 6-7, 1708, and was cremated there have been substantiated not only by contemporary and semi-contemporary evidence, but also by other authorities of undeniable historical importance. It has also been authenticated beyond doubt that Guru Gobind Singh did not appoint any one of his followers to succeed him as *Gurū* and that he had commanded his followers to look upon the Word of the Great Masters, as embodied in their holy book, the *Granth Sāhib*, as their *Gurū*, thenceforward known as the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*.

Like all his predecessors, from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh was an historical person who lived in this world. He was born at Patna in the eastern province of Bihar; he travelled throughout the length of the Uttar Pradesh on his way to Anandpur and spent the greater part of his life in the Panjab. He was neither a renunciatory recluse nor an ultra-spiritualistic saint given to slumbering meditation and thus beyond the reach of his fellow beings. He was no doubt a Godly being. But his godliness was not otherworldliness. He believed and declared that he had come to the world with a mission to protect, encourage and help the good and to chastise and uproot the evil-doers. This could be done only by leading an active life in the world, not in the hiding retreats of mountains and jungles, far away from the people, but by living amongst them, teaching and guiding them both by precept and example, leading them at every step of their worldly lives, protecting them from aggression and

oppression, ready to lay down his life in their cause, if need be. This was Guru Gobind Singh, both a teacher and a disciple—the real *Khālsā*—a saint and a soldier, a man of the world and yet detached.

As the son of a martyred father, he was the target of the attention of both the oppressed people and of the oppressive rulers. While his people looked up to him as their saviour and socio-political guide, the power-mad rulers looked upon him as a dangerous enemy who was inspiring their meek and submissive subjects with a spirit of freedom and resistance. The latter, therefore, were ever watchful of his programmes and vigilant of his activities.

As a scholar of many languages and a writer of soul-stirring poetry, practising the use of arms and training his men in it, he always acted in the open and kept himself in close and constant touch with those around him. As a commander of his armies fighting either against the Hill Rajas of the Sivalaks or Mughal levies of Sirhind and Lahore, he always occupied a prominent place within the sight of his men. Those were the days when it was *darshan* of the leader that inspired and sustained them in the field of action. He created out of the indistinguishable common people the distinct order of the *Khālsā*, with an uncommon form and symbols that helped distinguish them easily in a crowd of millions.

It was only on one occasion—the only one known to history—after the battle of Chamkaur that he had to disguise himself, as the tradition goes, to avoid being attacked at night and falling into the hands of the enemy who had broken his vow. A soldier, a brave and determined soldier, has to take all possible precautions to protect and save himself for the ultimate object of his struggle. He has to so dress himself or to adopt such a style of attire, or guise or external appearance as to avoid being recognized by the enemy and becoming an easy target of his bomb or bullet or falling into his hands. It is with this object in view that *Khaki* drill was used for the dress of the Indian army in the sun-burnt brownish lands and

was changed into olive green for use in the greenish jungles.

It was also under similar circumstances and for a similar purpose in an exigency of war that Guru Gobind Singh, after his successful escape from the siege of Chamkaur, accepted the shelter of Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, the Pathan brothers of Machhiwara, and adopted, in response to their request, the blue dress of the venerable *Pīr* of Uch. It was a part of tactics in an emergency during his war with Wazir Khan, the *faujdār* of Sirhind. It was a temporary precaution for his safety in *āpat-kāl*—time of adversity—as an old authority put it. And there was nothing wrong or derogatory in it. As soon as he was out of the reach of his pursuers, he cast his blue dress away and was up and doing again in rallying his scattered followers and fighting the battle of Muktsar.

The Guru knew no despondency and did not give way to frustration even under the most adverse circumstances. He lost not his heart at the deaths of his four young sons and his aged mother. Two of his sons he had himself sent into the field of battle at Chamkaur. He heard the news of the cold-blooded murder of his younger sons at Sirhind with complete resignation to the Will of God. His letter addressed to Emperor Aurangzeb from Dina, popularly known as the *Zafar Nāmāh* or Epistle of Victory, evidently in reply to one from the Emperor, speaks—through its style and content—volumes for the undisturbed and ever calm state of his mind.

With the cessation of war, evidently, under royal orders, Guru Gobind Singh again engaged himself in literary pursuits and completed and edited the Sikh holy book at Talwandi Sabo, now known as Damdama Sahib, in the Bhatinda district.

## 2. HIS LAST DAYS

Forgetful of the long standing animosity and continued persecution by the Mughal emperors, the Guru favourably responded to the invitation of Aurangzeb for a meeting and set out for the Deccan where the Emperor then lay encamped. But the Emperor died on February 20, 1707, while the Guru was on his way to the south. He received the news near



Baghaur in Rajasthan. He immediately marched back towards the Panjab and was in the neighbourhood of Delhi when the emissaries of the heir-apparent Prince Muhammad Muazzam appealed to him for assistance. He was then face to face with a great trial of his life. And he was able to meet it boldly and in the right way. He was not to be deflected from the right decision by memories of past bitter relations with the prince's ancestors. For him the bitter past had died with the past. He rose above the weaknesses of revengeful mortals and, like a true Guru and a chivalrous soldier that he was, he espoused the cause of the rightful claimant to the imperial throne against his usurping younger brother Muhammad Azam and helped him with a detachment of men in the battle of Jajau in June 1707. He met the new emperor, Shah Alam Bahadur Shah (the old Prince Muhammad Muazzam) at Agra in a public *darbar* on July 23, 1707, when the royal host publicly acknowledged the Guru's assistance in the war of succession and presented to him, in token thereof, a rich dress of honour, including a *dhukh-dhukhi* worth sixty thousand rupees. The Guru was then accompanied by a number of Sikhs. He kept his people in the Panjab and elsewhere fully informed through formal letters not only of his important activities but also of his future intentions and programme. He kept nothing secret from the Khalsa whom he had openly, and on many occasions, declared to be his very self—*Khālsā mero roop hai khās, Khālse men hau karaun nivās*. Nor did he ever, throughout his normal life, travel or move about incognito. In the train of Emperor Bahadur Shah moving to the Deccan, he was accompanied by a number of Sikhs and availed himself of the opportunity of visiting the various Sikh *Sangats* on the way. The *Tārīkh-i-Bahādur Shāhī* tells us that, when accompanying the royal camp, "he was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics and all sorts of people." [Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, viii, p. 566.]

At Nanded, where he arrived in the last week of August 1708, he performed the normal duties of life and regularly

attended and addressed the assemblies of the Sikhs and other people both in the morning and afternoon when the *dhādīs* headed by Nath Mall and his companions recited ballads on Sikh themes. He was in the best of spirits throughout his stay there. Although warned on his way to the Deccan by the Dadupanthi saint Jait Ram of the sorceries of the Bairagi ascetic Madho Das, the Guru visited his hermitage on the bank of the river Godavri on September 3, 1708, the day of sun-eclipse, and successfully reclaimed him to a normal life in the world. He then baptized him into a regular *Khalsa* and relumed him with Promethean fire to play in the Panjab the historic role of a valiant hero and a great martyr. Even when he had been stabbed near the heart and his imperfectly healed wound had burst open as the result of his bending a stiff bow, he maintained his usual cheerfulness and told his sorrowful Sikhs not to give way to mourning on his death. In his last farewell message, he told the *Khālsā*: "I have entrusted you to the Immortal God. ... I have infused my mental and bodily spirit into the *Granth Sāhib* and the *Khalsa*. ... Obey the *Granth Sahib*. It is the visible body of the *Guru*." [Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. V, p. 244.]

### 3. PERSONAL SUCCESSION DISCONTINUED —

#### THE GRANTH TO BE GURU IN FUTURE

It is a very significant thing indeed from historical point of view that he did not nominate any one of his followers to succeed him as *Gurū* of the Sikhs. Those who have studied the story of his life know that at the institution of the baptismal ceremony and, through it, of the creation of the *Khalsa*, on the Baisakhi day of 1756 Bikrami, March 30, 1699, he had not only presented himself to be-formally initiated into the fraternity of the *Khalsa* but had also submitted himself to the discipline which had been prescribed by him for the new order of the *Singhs* (the *Khalsa*). This virtually meant the surrender of his high office of Guruship to the will of the *Khalsa* and its merger into the body politic of the new order. And this is what he re-affirmed and declared from his deathbed. In the words of Sainapat, who was not only a

contemporary of the Guru but was also one of his trusted courtiers at Anandpur and who wrote his *Srī Gur Sobhā* in 1711, within three years of the Guru's death : "A day before his death, the Singhs asked him as to the form he was adopting (or the person whom he was nominating to succeed him). In reply he said that the *Khalsa* was his very self and that to them he had granted his robe—his physical self—and that "the Eternal and the limitless Word uttered with the Lord's light is our Supreme Master—*Satgurū Hamārā*." [XVIII, 40-44 (805-809), *Appendix II.*] This is supported by Bhai Nandlal, a devoted disciple, who was present at Nanded at the time of the Guru's death. He tells us in the *Rahit-nama* that the Guru had told him that "he (the Guru) had three *Rupa* (forms)—*Nirguna* (attributeless, or the invisible), *Sarguna* (with attributes, or the visible) and *Gur-Sabda* (the Master's Word). The first is *Ek rūpa tih gun te pare*, the Supreme Spirit, the formless Great Soul, All-Pervading, the *Parmatma*, of which the human soul is but a small part. The second is *Granth Ji*—the *Gur-Sabda*, the Word of the Great Gurus incorporated in the holy *Granth Sāhib*—*dūsar rūp Granth Ji Jān, ... Merā rūp Granth Ji Jān, is men bhed nahīn kuchh mān* (have no doubt about it). The third *Sarguna rūpa*, or the visible form, is the Sikhs, the *Khalsa*, absorbed in the *Gurbānī* (the Word of the Gurus, the *Guru Granth Sahib*), night and day.

ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਾ, ਭਾਈ ਨੰਦ ਲਾਲ

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਚ

ਦੋਹਾ

ਤੀਨ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਮੋਹਿ ਕੇ ਸੁਨੋ ਨੰਦ ਚਿਤ ਲਾਇ ।

ਨਿਰਗੁਣ ਸਰਗੁਣ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦ ਹੈਂ ਕਹੇਂ ਤੁਹਿ ਸਮਝਾਇ ॥

ਚੋਪਾਈ

ਏਕ ਰੂਪ ਤਿਹ ਗੁਣ ਤੇ ਪਰੈ । ਨੀਤ ਨੀਤ ਜਿਹ ਨਿਗਮ ਉਚਰੈ ॥ ...

ਦੂਸਰ ਰੂਪ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਜਾਣ । ਉਨੇ ਅੰਗ ਮੇਰੇ ਕਰ ਮਾਨ । ...

ਜੋ ਮਮ ਸਾਥ ਚਾਹੇ ਕਰ ਬਾਤ । ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ ਵਿਚਾਰੈ ਸਾਥ ।

ਜੋ ਮੁਝ ਬਚਨ ਸੁਣਨ ਕੀ ਚਾਇ । ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ ਸੁਣੈ ਚਿਤ ਲਾਇ ।

ਮੇਰ ਰੂਪ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਜਾਣ । ਇਸ ਮੈ ਭੇਦ ਨਹੀ ਕੁਛ ਮਾਨ ।

ਤੀਸਰ ਰੂਪ ਸਿਖ ਹੈਂ ਮੋਰ । ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਰਤ ਜਿਹ ਨਿਸ ਭੋਰ ।

[Appendix I.]

Another close associate of the Guru and the author of a *Rahit-nāmā* is Bhai Prahlad Singh who has also recorded the Guru's commandment in this respect saying :

With the order of the Eternal Lord has been established  
the (Sikh) Panth.

All the Sikhs are hereby commanded to obey the *Granth*  
as the Guru.

ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਾ, ਪ੍ਰਹਲਾਦ ਸਿੰਘ

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਸਿਓਂ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਚਲਾਇਓ ਪੰਥ ॥

ਸਭ ਸਿਖਨ ਕੋ ਬਚਨ ਇਹ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨੀਓ ਗਰੰਥ ॥

Similarly Bhai Chaupa Singh, another associate of the Guru, has mentioned this commandment in his *Rahit-nāmā*.

Thus Guru Gobind Singh abolished for all time to come the nomination of any one person as the *Gurū* of the Sikhs. After him the *Khalsa*, with *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as their eternal *Gurū*, became the *Gurū-panth*, believing in the Unity and Uniqueness of the One Formless, Self-existing, All-pervading and Eternal God.

With this, the historical life of Guru Gobind Singh came to an end and he departed from this world on Katik *Sudi* 5, 1765 Bikrami, October 6-7, 1708 A.D.

#### 4. MYTH-MAKING ABOUT GURU GOBIND SINGH

The world over, prophets and founders of religions have irreparably suffered at the hands of imaginative poets and fablers. They would not let them remain figures of history. To distinguish them from the earthly people, they must raise them to a different other-worldly plane.

The unreal and illusory world of poets and fablers is different from the real world of history. The poets live in the world of angels beyond, while the student of history lives here in this world of men, of natural men, who live and die in the natural way. But the man of poets' imagination is not a natural man. Either he does not die a



natural death or disappears—deceiving and defying God and His natural laws—along with his physical body of flesh and blood, his dress of cotton and silk, his worldly arms and ornaments of iron, silver and gold, nay even with his pet horse along with its embroidered saddle and trappings. Or, after his death and cremation whereby the body is reduced to ashes, he rises up again and moves about not openly amongst the men of this world but secretly, known only to unknown men, who existed only in the imagination of poets and fablers or in the whims of abnormal people.

To them he alone is a prophet or an inspired leader who exhibits supernatural powers and works miracles. Therefore, the ultra-enthusiastic devotees would create fables out of their fertile imagination and so intersperse and weave them in the life-stories of their heroes, saints and prophets as to make an integral part of them. But a fable is after all a fable, a fictitious story. And it betrays itself. Such stories have found their way into the lives of Lord Christ and Prophet Muhammad and of gods and goddesses and of Buddhist and Jain saints and sages. Even the Sikh Gurus, who lived and moved about in the historical period, could not escape them.

Guru Gobind Singh was a man of this earth, a historical man, who made his countrymen realize that life was real and earnest and not *māyā* and *mithyā*. It was, therefore, worth living, not in wasteful pursuits of empty show and momentary pleasure but in the service of man—for the uplift and advancement of goodness and resistance of evil. That was the mission of his life which he so often declared in unambiguous resounding words. He was no doubt an extraordinary man, a fully realized being. But he was not supernatural, outside the operation of the laws of nature. He was born like all other men, lived in this world among and for other men and died a natural death like all other men of the world. To make something unnatural, supernatural or a god of him is to go against his own words wherein he has declared in clear language that he was but a man, a slave of the Almighty Lord, and those who called

him God should fall into the pit of hell :

ਜੇ ਹਮ ਕੋ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਉਚਰਿ ਹੈ ।

ਤੇ ਸਭ ਨਰਕ ਕੁੰਡ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਿ ਹੈ ।

ਮੈ ਕੋ ਦਾਸ ਤਵਨ ਕਾ ਜਾਨੈ ।

ਯਾ ਮੈ ਭੇਦ ਨ ਰੰਚ ਪਛਾਨੈ ॥32॥

ਮੈ ਹੋਂ ਪਰਮ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੋ ਦਾਸਾ ।

ਦੇਖਨ ਆਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਤਮਾਸਾ ... ॥33॥

Those who call me God, shall fall into the pit of hell.

Consider me to be a slave of His. Have no doubt about it.

I am but a slave of the Almighty Lord, and have come to see the spectacle of the world.

[*Bachittar Natak*, vi, 32, 33.]

India has no doubt been the land of great philosophers, poets and masters of astrology, astronomy and many other sciences. But as believers in the unreality of human life which, according to their negative philosophy, was *māyā* and *mithyā*, illusory and unreal, they paid no serious attention to history, the objective recording of its activities. In an unreal world they saw no sense in keeping accounts of the transitory lives of the human beings who were but insignificant creatures in this vast universe. With this philosophy and attitude, the scholars of ancient India could not appreciate and develop the discipline of history. They were poets par excellence, no doubt. But poets are men of imagination and emotion. They at times rise to great heights far above the unalloyed truths of life, and in their flights of imagination they create a world of their own and present things and happenings of this world in their own subjective manner, not unoften far removed from reality. In this, the poets say, lies the skill and beauty of this art. This is particularly the case with the Braja-bhasha poets under the influence of their ancient literature. The poets of other Indian languages, including Panjabi, have not lagged behind them in the introduction of fables and supernatural element in their epical narratives. Thus, history in the hands of imaginative and emotional poets and fablers is very often mutilated

and distorted beyond recognition. Their works on historical subjects are not, therefore, always, and in all respects, entirely truthful and dependable, and they should be studied with caution. Most of the Sikh *Janam-Sākhīs* and *Gur-bilās*, *Sūraj Prakāsh* and *Panth Prakāsh* type of literature fall under this category. The prose works after the *Janam-sākhīs*, however, are comparatively more factual and reliable.

I have laboured this point at some length to show how fables and the supernatural element have at some places come to be introduced into the history of Sikh Gurus and how a number of their historical events have come to be enshrouded in mystery.

In the absence of reliable records and chronicles of the ancient period, we cannot easily say to what extent historical truths have thus suffered. But the case of the medieval and modern periods is different. There is abundant reliable original, contemporary and semi-contemporary evidence available for comparative study of different versions of controversial events and for sifting fact from fiction. It is in the light of such material that we propose to examine here in the coming paragraphs the last event of the earthly life of Guru Gobind Singh, i. e., his death at Nanded and the appointment of his successor.

##### 5. HISTORICAL RECORD ON THE GURU'S DEATH AT NANDED

It will greatly help us understand the various points of this study if we know the different types of scholars who have written about the last days of Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded. First of all, there are those who were then present at Nanded or had been in its neighbourhood and had unmistakable knowledge of his death. To this type also belong those who had known the Guru personally, had met his companions and had received first-hand information about the end of his life.

The second type comprises the unattached scholars who have written on this topic purely from historical point of view. Only such of them have taken notice of his last command and farewell message as had studied the growth and

development of the Sikh movement from the time of Guru Nanak and were interested in the religious life of the Sikh people after the death of their last Guru. They are mostly non-Sikhs — Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The Sikh writers mostly belong to the eulogistic type. In their deep devotion and overflowing enthusiasm they have at times allowed full and free play to their imagination in keeping with the tradition of their ancient Hindu precursors. In their effort to place the Sikh Gurus on a par with, if not above, the prophets of other religions in the working of miracles, they seem not only to have borrowed and adapted some of their myths but have also invented a number of them to embellish their narratives. The myth about Guru Gobind Singh having been seen in the jungle by a wood-seller or an ascetic *Sadhu* in the morning following his death and cremation has apparently come from Christian tradition wherein Lord Jesus Christ is stated to have been seen alive and walking on the road after his crucifixion and death. Or, it may be the creation of the superstitious mind not willing to acknowledge the fact that a religious prophet such as Guru Gobind Singh could leave the mortal coil like an ordinary human being.

To come to the story of the death of Guru Gobind Singh. It is agreed on all hands that, while at Nanded, he was one evening stabbed by a Pathan and that his wound was stitched and bandaged by a surgeon sent by Emperor Bahadur Shah. It is also accepted without doubt that his imperfectly healed wound burst open when the Guru bent a stiff bow presented to him by a visitor.

The news of the death of Guru Gobind Singh finds a prominent mention in the Royal Court News, the *Akhbārāt-i-Darbār-i-Muallā*, of October-November 1708 A. D. and in the *Bahādur Shāh Nāmā* in a number of places. Emperor Bahadur Shah had crossed the river Godavri on October 7, 1708, to quell the rebellion of his younger brother Kam Bakhsh before the news about the death of the Guru was reported to him. For the next three weeks he was extremely busy



preparing for the coming struggle. On October 28, the Emperor ordered the grant of a dress of honour to the son of Jamshed Khan Afghan who had died at the hands of the Guru. Apparently he was the same person who had under the assumed name of Gul Khan stabbed the Guru at Nanded and had fallen under his sword before he could escape. Or, he might have been the companion of Gul Khan killed by the Sikhs while he was trying to run away after the death of Gul Khan.

On the death of the Guru having been reported to the Emperor, he ordered on October 30, 1708 (26th Sha'ban, 2nd Bahadurshahi regnal year), for a dress of honour to be conferred upon the Guru's (adopted) mourning son Ajit Singh — *Hukm shud kih ba-pisar-i-Gobind Rāo Nānakpanthī khilat-i-matami-i-pidar-bi-dihand* —

حکم شد کہ بہ پسر گوبند راؤ نانک منتقی خلعت ماتمی پدر بدہند۔

It was ordered (by the Emperor) that a robe (*khilat*) be bestowed upon the son of Gobind Rao Nanakpanthi mourning for the death of his father.

Ajit Singh had been adopted by *Mātā* Sundarī, wife of the Guru, and had been acknowledged as such by the Emperor after the Guru's death as has been occasionally mentioned by name in the *Akhbārāt* and other official records. [*Akhbārāt*, 26th Shaban, regnal year 2, October 30, 1708; June 1, 1711; December 30, 1711; also *Akhbārāt* Ms. pp. 123-24; Chatarman, *Chahār Gulshan*, Ms. pp. 140-41; *Mākhiz-i-Twārikh-i-Sikhān*, Vol. I, pp. 86-88.]

On Ramazan 9, 2nd Bahadurshahi (November 11, 1708), the Emperor's orders were solicited about the movable property of the deceased Guru which, according to the Mughal practice, ought to have been confiscated. The Emperor, however, commanded that "These goods will not add to the affluence of the royal treasury. It is the property of saintly people. It should not be interfered with"—*Hukm shud az-*

*in amwāl khazānāh-i-bādshāhān māmūr na-mī-shawad. Māl-i-darveshān ast, Mazāham na-shawand*

حکم شد ازین اموال خزانہ بادشاہان معمور نمی شود۔ مال  
درویشان است۔ مزاحم نہ شوند۔

[Cf. *Bahādur Shāh Nāmā*; Irvine, *Later Mughals*, i.90.]

Three years later when the Emperor was moving towards Lahore, he ordered on December 30, 1711 (1st Zil-Hijja, Bahadurshahi 6) the release of the long confiscated lands of Chak Guru—Amritsar—in the name of Ajit Singh mentioned in the *Akḥbārāt* as the son of Guru Govind Singh.

*Dhādī* Nath Mall was present in the camp of the Guru at Nanded and used to recite ballads in the afternoon assemblies of the Sikhs there. One such ballad known as the *Amar Nāmāh*, composed under the name of the Guru himself in the first person, has come down to us through the son of Bhai Fatta, the seventh descendant of Nath Mall. According to its colophon, it was completed in the month of Katik 1765 Bikrami after the death of the tenth Guru. As the 30th of Katik of that year corresponded to October 31, 1708, the *Amar Nāmāh* was evidently completed within twenty-four days of the Guru's death. Describing it in the first person in the words of the Guru, the *Amar Nāmā* says in lines 61-62 :

مرا عزم شد سوی دارالبقا فضائی سلامت بدارد خدا  
مبالتد سنگھان من برقرار سماعت نمائند از دھادی وار

I (then) resolved to set for the lasting abode in heaven,  
which is the place of all peace and divine blissfulness.  
My Singhs (the *Khālsā*) shall remain firm, listening to  
*Vārs* from *Dhādī* singers.

In keeping with the tradition of the ancient balladists, Nath Mall did not enter into the details of the painful event.

Except in the case of deaths occurring in the thick of battle, the reciters or writers of *Vārs* generally skipped over the mention of deaths or made a casual reference to them in a prose sentence. In support of this observation we have the example of Bhai Gurdas. He was one of the closest relatives of Guru Arjun on the mother's side, and was also one of the revered and knowledgeable Sikhs of his time. In his *Vārān* he has in a systematic manner given brief accounts not only of the Gurus from the time of Guru Nanak to Guru Hargobind but also of the various *Sangats* and important Sikhs in the Panjab and outside. But he does not make any clear and direct statement on the martyrdom of Guru Arjun which gave a sharp turn to the development and transformation of the Sikh movement. He has quietly passed over the event with only a casual reference to his death in a line or two.

In his *Ibrat Nāmāh* or the *Swāneh*, 1705-19 A. D., Mirza Muhammad Harisi had devoted some thirteen pages to the contemporary account of the Sikhs, with particular reference to Banda Singh.† He tells us that Guru Gobind Singh had travelled in the train of Emperor Bahadur Shah to the Deccan and was killed there in 1120 *al-Hijri*, 1708 A. D., by an Afghan, an old enemy of his, and his body was cremated according to Hindu rites. Ajit Singh, who was popularly known as his son and had been received into royal favour, remained with the Emperor.

The *Srī Gur Sobhā* by poet Sainapat, mentioned as Saina Singh by Bawa Sumer Singh in his *Pothī Gur-bilās kī*, was completed in 1768 Bikrami, 1711 A. D., i.e., within three years of the Guru's death. He was an old Sikh of his and had lived with him at Anandpur. His is the first book which could be said to have been a reliable biography of the Guru. His narrative was evidently based on the first-hand information rece-

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† For the fact that *Bairāgī* Madho Das was formally baptized as a *Singh* by Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded in September 1708, see Ganda Singh's *Bandā Singh Bahādur* (English, 1935), pp. 15-19; (Panjabi, 1964) 19-21; the *Sikh Review*, April 1961.

ived from the Sikhs who had returned from Nanded and had been eye-witnesses to what they had related to Sainapat. As far as we can see, the purity of his account, though brief in many places, is not muddled with the mixture of imaginary myths introduced later into the life of the Guru, beginning with the *Gur-bilās Pātshāhī Das* by Koer Singh, written in 1751, forty-three years after the death of the Guru.

Mentioning the death of the Guru (xviii-34-37) without any poetical embellishment, the *Srī Gur Sobhā* tells us that a day before the event the Guru had, in reply to a question of the Sikhs, said that he ‘‘had bestowed his physical form upon the *Khalsa—bakhsh deeo Khālis ko jāmā* (xviii-41)—and that the Limitless and the Eternal Word was the Satguru—*Satgurū hamārā apar apārā Shabad bichārā ajar-jaran* (xviii-43). This was Guru Gobind Singh's last message and his final commandment saying in unmistakable language and clear words that he was not appointing any particular individual as the succeeding Guru and that the Khalsa under the guidance of the Divine Word — the *Gur-bānī* — was to be the future physical and spiritual representative of the Guru. [*Appendix II.*]

This has since become the accepted creed of the Sikhs as inculcated by Bhai Nandlal in his *Rahit Nāmā* or the Rules of Conduct. Bhai Nandlal, as history knows, was a devoted Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh and had stayed with him for some time at Anandpur. According to the *Amar Nāmāh*, line 42, Bhai Nandlal was present in the Emperor's camp at Nanded as one of his ministers during the Guru's stay there. He was a distinguished scholar of Persian and Panjabi and, out of his ten works known to us, eight — five in Persian and three in Panjabi — are commentaries on Sikh life and teachings. One of them, the *Rahit-nāmā*, which is written in the form of a dialogue between the Guru and the Bhai, lays down the rules for Sikh conduct. Therein, as already mentioned in one of the previous paragraphs, the Guru had told Bhai Nandlal that, in addition to his soul being a part of the Invisible Divine Soul (— *Nirgun sarūp*—), his two other forms were the *Granth* — *merā rup Granth jī jān*—embodying the *Gur-bānī*, and the



Sikhs (the *Khālsā*) deeply absorbed in it. This not only clarifies but also supports the Guru's last message and commandment to the Khalsa mentioned in the *Srī Gur Sobhā*.

The *Gur-bilās Chhevin Pātshāhī* leaves no doubt about the recognition by the Sikhs of the *Guruship* of *Guru Granth Sahib* after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The *Gur-bilas* was begun by its author, poet Sohan, in May 1717 and was completed on July 22, 1718 (Sawan 22, Sudi 5, 1775 Bikrami), within ten years of the Guru's death. Its fourth chapter is devoted to the compilation of the holy book by Guru Arjun and the first twelve verses of the fifth chapter to its formal installation in the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. Therein the author has invariably used the then accepted prefix *Guru* to the *Granth* and has called it the *Gurū Granth*. The following verses of chapter IV are very significant indeed :

ਮਮ ਆਗਿਆ ਸਬ ਹੀ ਸੁਨੋ ਸਤਿ ਬਾਤ ਨਿਰਧਾਰ ।

ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਮ ਮਾਨੀਓ ਭੇਦ ਨਾ ਕੋਊ ਬਿਚਾਰ ॥ 409 ॥

ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕਲਜੁਗ ਭਯੋ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰੂਪ ਸਮਾਨ ।

ਦਸ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਰੂਪ ਇਹ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਜਾਨ ॥ 412 ॥

ਗੁਰੂ ਦਰਸ ਜਿਹ ਦੇਖਨਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦਰਸਾਇ ।

ਬਾਤ ਕਰਨਿ ਗੁਰ ਸੋ ਚਹੈ ਪੜ੍ਹੈ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਮਨ ਲਾਇ ॥ 413 ॥

Hear ye all, this precept of mine as true and certain.  
Recognize the *Granth* to be the same as the *Guru*,  
think not of any difference between the two. (409)

In the Kali-yuga, the *Guru Granth* has assumed the  
form of the *Sri Guru*.

Recognize the *Guru Granth* to be the very self of the Ten  
Gurus. (412)

He who wishes to see the *Guru*, let him see the *Guru  
Granth*.

And, he who wishes to speak to the *Guru*, let him read  
the *Granth* with a devoted mind. (413)

[Chapter IV, old ed. pp. 74-75; new ed. p. 90.]

We have available to us in a collection of manuscripts the accounts of Guru Gobind Singh's meeting with Emperor Bahadur Shah in 1707 (*Bahādur Shāh ke Mulākāt kā Prasang*), of

his last days and death at Nanded in the Deccan in 1708 (*Gurū Sāhib Daswen Pātshāh jī ke Jotī jot Samāwane kā Prasang*) and of the first battle of the Sikhs at Amritsar with the Mughal forces of Lahore in 1709 (*Vār Amritsar kī*) during the governorship of Aslam Khan. Copies of the first two manuscripts are also available in the *Amrit Gutkā* preserved in the Panjab State Archives, Patiala. According to the *Gurū Sāhib Daswen Pātsahāh jī ke Jotī jot Samāwane kā Prasang*, which is based on the information received from the companions of the Guru himself — *Hazūr ke khās Sikhān dī rasnā theen* —, the Guru before his death, told the Sikhs that he was not appointing anyone to succeed him as *Gurū*, that he was entrusting them to *Srī Sāhib* and the *Sabda*, the Great Word, as given in the *Granth Sāhib* which should be accepted by them all. [Appendix III.]

The *Parchiān Sewā Dās*, according to the date mentioned in the manuscript preserved in the Panjab University, Lahore, was written in 1798 Bikrami, 1741 A.D., while the manuscript in the Central State Library Patiala, bears 1896 Bikrami, 1839 A.D., as the date of its transcription. Sewa Das was an Udasi *Sadhu*. Writing in the style of a mystic, he tells us that the Guru had his funeral pyre prepared under his own supervision. He mounted it fully dressed and armed, sat on it cross-legged and that his light blended with the Divine Light — *jotī meh jot samāne*. Heaps of flowers and scent were then showered on the pyre. After pouring plenty of *ghee* thereon, the pyre was set alight—*bahur baisantar lagāyā dīyā*. The Sikhs standing there started crying loudly. Several of them tried to jump into the flaming pyre, but they were not allowed to do so. When the pyre was all reduced to ashes, they found no trace of the dead body or of the Guru's arms. "All then *so thought* that the *Gurū Bābā* had gone (to heaven) bodily." [Appendix IV.]

It is here for the first time, thirty-three years after the death and cremation of the Guru, that a suggestion has been made by a mystical minded *Sādhū* of the Guru having ascended to heaven bodily. This is only a reflection of the thinking of an ultra-devotional mind of an ascetic fed on the

mythology of ancient Hindu *Purānas* full of supernatural fables added to the lives of their *avtārs*, and also of the Gurus including Guru Nanak and his sons. But unwittingly Sewa Das has given to the story of the Guru's death a touch of suicide also as it would appear from the narrative of the *Parchiān*.

Ten years later, in 1808 Bikrami, 1751 A. D., Koer Singh wrote his *Gur-bilās Pātshāhī Das*, making a liberal use of the *Srī Gur Sobhā*. He has, however, covered a broader canvas and given an extensive and a coherent picture of the Tenth Guru's life. In his twenty-first chapter devoted to the death of the Guru, *Pyān Gur ker*, based on the commentaries of Bhai Mani Singh, as mentioned in the colophon, Koer Singh tells us that, in reply to a question of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh had said that he would (always) be with the Sikhs and that he had raised his worthy sons (the *Khālsā*) to wreak vengeance. [XXI, 60-1, p. 281, *Appendix V*.]

#### 6. GURU GRANTH ORAINED AS GURU

This is clearly a reflection of the mind of Koer Singh under the influence of the brutal treatment that had been meted out to Bhai Mani Singh, his preceptor, during the latter's captivity and martyrdom at Lahore in 1734 when he was hacked to pieces limb by limb under the orders of Nawab Zakariya Khan, the governor of Lahore. Koer Singh has also made some very disparaging observations on the lowering standard of morality of the so-called religious teachers of his time moving about from house to house and begging for alms. "Without meditation, these immoral people", says he, "call themselves *Sant*, while in their minds they think of other people's women. As such, in the dark age of *Kali*, the real saints have disappeared like sun in the clouds." "Therefore, my virtuous Sikhs", says the Guru, "should acknowledge the *Gurū Granth* as supreme and worthy of worship" and not any pretender *Sant* of the type mentioned above. [XXI, 89-93.] Koer Singh then goes on to say, in the words of Guru Gobind Singh in the next verses, that Guru Nanak had himself told Baba Buddha Ramdas :

“Recognize Ten of our incarnations when your family will be supreme.” [XXI, 94-95, p. 283.]

He then says :

“When the Ten incarnations disappear [from this world with the death of the Tenth one], then the ancestral line—*kul*—will not continue.”

“It is no longer the time for Guruship : I will not anoint anyone [now].

“Consider the entire Khalsa to have been entrusted to the protection (lap) of the Wielder of the Sword (*Asi Ketu*)—the Divine Protector.

“I have given to you to hold the sheet of the embodiment of Word (*shabad kā rūp*). He who accepts it shall be an incomparable—really true—*Singh*.

“Recognize *Srī Granth jī* as ever-ready (readily available, ever-present) *darshan* (sight, appearance or embodiment) of the Guru.

“Bring it here to this place.” [XXI, 96-98, pp. 283-84.]

The Guru had then grown very weak, as has been mentioned in verse XXI-56 [p. 280]. The Holy Book was, therefore, brought to him. Coming to know of it, he said : “Let us go to the *Adi Sat-Guru* (the great *Adi Gurū Granth Sāhib*).” Evidently, he could then see that his end was approaching.

“Then he got up along with all of his Sikhs, took five *paise* and a coconut with him, offered them himself [to the Holy Book], bowed down, circumambulated with all reverence and said :

‘He who wishes to talk to me should read the *Gurū [Granth Sāhib]* and receive the peace of mind.

‘*There is no other Guru equal to it. Without any hesitation, I utter this truth.*

*There is no other Guru like it anywhere. Therefore, it should be accepted as the True Guru.*

‘With its study (*darshan*) sins disappear. And by realizing its Word in practice, salvation is obtained.’”

[XXI, 99-102, p. 284, *Appendix V*.]

Saying this he calmly prepared himself for the end and desired a funeral pyre to be raised with the sandalwood worth



five thousand rupees previously purchased from a Labana Sikh. He told his wife Sahib Devi not to immolate herself on his pyre and sent her to Delhi. He then consoled the sorrowful Sikhs explaining to them the inevitableness of the end of human life saying: "He who has full faith in the *Gurū Granth* and does not place his reliance on anything else shall have his wishes fulfilled by the Guru. With full faith in it, all suspicions will disappear. He then bowed, to *Srī Granth* prayed in all reverence, made offerings to Rababi musicians and was absorbed in the Word of the *Granth Sāhib*." [XXI, 124-37, pp. 286-87, *Appendix V*.]

The Guru died a little before midnight and was cremated in a place enclosed by a tent-wall, a Sikh setting fire to his dead body. The Sikhs then went out of the enclosure and stood there. Flames went up and the body of the Guru became all ashes. "Then came all the gods (from heaven) blowing conches and showering flowers and, amidst shouts of victory, took the Master away with them, with all the heavens (*lokas*) singing his praises." [XXI, 140, 142-43, p. 288.]

On the fourth morning they searched the ashes, washing them with diluted milk, and found only a dagger therein. The Sikhs were all drowned in sorrow. At that time appeared on the scene an Udasi *Sadhu* and said that it was not becoming of the Sikhs to be sorrowful, for he had met the Guru in full dress on horse back and the Guru had told him (the Sadhu) to convey his message to the Sikhs not to go into mourning.

[XXI, 144-45, pp. 288-89, *Appendix V*.]

Better accomplished in the art of writing, Koer Singh has not only supplied more details to his story but has also given clarity to it. He tells us in explicit language that Guru Gobind Singh discontinued the line of personal *Gurūship* and did not appoint anyone to succeed him as *Gurū*. In fact, he had surrendered his personality to the *Khālsā* when he became one of them at the first baptismal ceremony and he publicly declared this merger on many an occasion afterwards, and especially a little before his death at Nanded. Entrusting the Khalsa to the care of the Divine Protector, as declared by the Great

Master, Koer Singh narrates at some length the formal installation of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as the *Gurū*. He had been in close touch with Bhai Mani Singh who was a contemporary and close associate of Guru Gobind Singh and was the first person to be appointed as the reader of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* in the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar by *Mātā* Sundri after the Guru's death. As such, he was the best informed person on the subject in addition to being the most qualified to explain the significance of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* to Koer Singh. He also tells us that a dagger had been found in the heap of the ashes of the Guru's pyre.

As a poet, however, he has introduced into the story—of course after the pyre had been set on fire by a Sikh—the arrival from heaven of all the ancient gods, blowing conches and showering flowers, to offer a hearty welcome to the Guru and to escort him to heaven with all the pomp and splendour of a royal reception. This, of course, is the fiction of the author's imagination added as poetical embellishment and does not form a part of the Guru's historical biography.

According to Koer Singh, the *Sadhu* had the *darshan* of the Guru on the fourth day of his death and not on the following morning.

Another work of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, which we may refer to here, is the *Bansāvalī Nāmā* of Kesar Singh Chhibar completed in 1826 Bikrami, 1769-70 A. D. Kesar Singh's ancestors had been in the service of Guru Gobind Singh as *dīwāns*. He claims to have seen and consulted in his early days a *bahī* or account-book of the house of the Guru. The tenth *charan* or chapter of the book deals with the life of Guru Gobind Singh. Towards the end of it, in stanzas 649-654, he mentions the death of the Guru and his last commandment saying in reply to the questions of the Sikhs: "The *Granth* is the *Gurū*; you hold the garment [seek the protection] of the Timeless God — *bachan kītā Granth hai Gurū, laṛ pakro Akāl* [650]. Two hours (*gharī*) later the Guru went to heaven; his light blended with Light. The same night he was cremated after he had been bathed

in the rose and Ganga water. [X, 653, *Appendix VI.*]

Kesar Singh makes no mention of any heavenly reception or anything else of the kind.

In the fourteenth chapter, the author reaffirms that Guru Gobind Singh had formally proclaimed and installed *Granth Sāhib* on the *gaddī* of *Gurūship* and that no one else was to be recognized as *Guru* (verses 220-21). He also says that “*at present Granth Sāhib is our Gurū,*” and “*without the Granth, accept no one else as Gurū*”. [Verses 300, 307; also see 297, *Appendix VI.*]

Bhai Sukha Singh, the author of the *Gur-bilās*, completed in 1854 Bikrami, 1797 A.D., is more of a poet than a narrator of events in any chronological or historical order. According to him, Emperor Bahadur Shah moved away from Nanded soon after the arrival of the Guru there, while the latter stayed on at Nanded. But actually the Emperor stayed there for some six weeks and crossed the river Godavri to the south on October 7, 1708, soon after the death of the Guru. He was present at Nanded on the left bank of the river throughout the last days of the Guru. He was there when, according to the *Amar Nāmāh*, the Hindus of Nanded complained to him on September 3, 1708, against the Sikhs having killed goats and cooked meat on the sacred day of sun-eclipse. It was on that day that the Guru had visited the hermitage of *Bairāgī* Madho Das and had baptized him as Banda Singh, who became the first liberator of the Panjab from under the Mughal yoke. The Emperor was still at Nanded when he sent his own surgeon, a European (Ferrangi), Call or Cole by name, when the Guru was stabbed.

At this stage, Sukha Singh has added a new miraculous story. When the Guru's wound, says Sukha Singh, burst open on account of his bending a stiff foreign bow and shooting a number of arrows therefrom, he selected the site of a grave for his cremation. When the local Muslims objected to a part of the graveyard being cleared for it, the Guru is said to have claimed it as his own place from ancient days. The grave was then dug up under official orders and, to the

surprise of all present, no bones were found there. Instead of them, a *chaukī* (a low wooden-stool), a *poūā* (a wooden shoe) and a *dhūp-danī* (a censer) were unearthed from the bottom of the grave.

The foreign origin of the bow and the shooting of arrows therefrom have been added to the old story by Sukha Singh from his own imagination. He also brings into the narrative a fictive *Sādhū* with the difference that he appears not on the fourth day of the Guru's cremation as mentioned by Koer Singh but on the very first morning following the cremation.

About the last message of the Guru, Sukha Singh says that the Guru entrusted the Khalsa to the care of God and enjoined upon them to read the *Bānī* of the Ten Gurus, that is, the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* — *Das mehlān kī parhiye bānī* [XXX, 27]. At the same time he lays great emphasis on the practice of arms to be able to fight (against the oppression of) the Turks (the Mughal government). This shows how the eighteenth century Sikhs were reacting to the high-handedness of the Mughals and Afghans under whom they had suffered.

Sukha Singh then continues the usual story saying that nothing *at all* was found in the ashes of the Guru's pyre—not even the dagger mentioned by Koer Singh. The year of the death of the Guru given by him (1750, corresponding to 1693 A.D.) is also incorrect.

In the closing lines of this chapter XXX, devoted to the death of the Guru, he gives the colophon saying in the *chaupai* 105 that with it all the chapters of the *Gur-bilās* have been completed—*bhaye dhyāye pūre sabhai sāch jāno*. Having completed the book proper, he adds another chapter calling it *afzoon* or a superfluous appendant, meaning *faltoo* in Panjabi. In this after-addition he gives the story of two professional robbers, Bala Rai and Rustam Rai, both brothers, of the village of Janwara near Bidar. They had been captured by Shahu (Chahatrapati) and imprisoned in the fort of Satara.

In vain had they prayed to many a Hindu god and Muslim *pīr* but nobody had come to their rescue. One day



they heard of Guru Gobind Singh from a Sikh watchman and requested him to pray to the Guru for their release, promising to become Sikhs if the prayer were accepted. And lo ! in response to the prayer of the Sikh, the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh appeared in the fort on horseback. He asked them to utter *Wāhigurū*, and their chains and fetters fell off. He then desired them to hold the stirrups of his saddle, and the two brothers were mysteriously flown away like birds for twelve *kos*, some eighteen miles, to the Vindhyachal mountain where they were freed to go their own way. The Guru's spirit then disappeared. Here, the distance between Satara and Vindhyachal is also wrong. Sukha Singh, evidently, had no idea of the distance between the fort of Satara and the Vindhya range which is about two hundred and eighty miles and not eighteen miles or twelve *kos* as given by him. In fact, the whole story is an imaginative concoction.

In reply to an enquiry made by the author, Professor Ganesh H. Khare, the well known scholar of Maratha history and Curator of the Bharata Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandala, Poona, writes in his letter of October 10, 1971: "As far as my reading of the Maratha history goes, I have not come across the reference to brothers Balarao and Rustamrao escaping from the Satara fort." Shri V. A. Kanole, the eminent research scholar in the history of Maharashtra and Honorary Secretary of the Godateer Itihas Samshodhan Mandal, Nanded, has also not been able to trace any mention of the Balarao-Rustamrao incident in any work on the history of the Marathas. In the absence of any reference to it in the Maratha history, the story of the mysterious escape of the Maratha brothers of Janwara from the fort of Satara with the help of (the spirit of) Guru Gobind Singh tumbles down as fictitious having no historical basis to support it.

Whatever the credulous believer in supernaturalism might say in explaining such fables, they are unnatural on the face of them and cannot be accepted as historical events happening with men living in this world in flesh and blood. And if any pretender hopes to build up a case for his

pretensions on such fictitious or supernatural fables, he is only deceiving himself.

The account of the death of Guru Gobind Singh as given in *sākhī* 27 of *Sakhiān Pātshāhī Das* chapter of the *Mehmā Prakāsh* by Sarup Das Bhalla, pp.891-93, may on the whole be said to be nearest the truth and may be accepted as objective and historical. Written by a descendant of Guru Amar Das and based, apparently, on reliable evidence, it was completed in January 1801. The manuscript referred to by Bawa Sumer Singh in his *Pothi Gur-bilas ki*, p. 713, was written in 1774 (1831 *Bikramī*). The first part of the chapter regarding the excitement to the Pathan who attacked and wounded the Guru seems to have come from earlier writers. But the second part is based entirely on independent evidence. In the absence of any poetical embellishment and unnatural, mysterious or supernatural element introduced into it, the account may be accepted as historically correct.

According to the *Mehmā Prakash* :

When the Guru took the bow in his hand and wished to pull it, the Sikhs submitted that the wound had not yet completely healed. The Guru said that there was no cause for fear. He then pulled the bow, and the stitches gave way. At this time the Guru said that the time for his death had come. He called the Sikhs to his presence and he was pleased to see them. The Sikhs then asked him where they would have the *darshan* [of the Guru]. The Great Guru, merciful to the lowly, said: "Our Ten forms have come to end. Now recognize the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* in my place. He who wishes to talk to me should read the *Adi Granth Sāhib*. This will be like talking to me. I have entrusted you to the lap of the Almighty." Having said this, he desired them to prepare the *bibān* (the wooden board to carry the dead body to the cremation ground). After this was done, he lay down and covered himself with a sheet and liberated himself from human existence (or merged himself in the Divinity). Neither did he come anywhere nor did he go anywhere. Seeing this spectacle all people fully believed that the Great Guru was a part of the Divine Light. The Guru's body was then cremated and the *Srī Gurū Granth* was recognized in place of the Guru. [Appendix VII.]

This is a simple and straightforward account of the death of Guru Gobind Singh with no mystery or embellishment enshrouding it. And it agrees in all its essentials with the contemporary and the earliest known accounts.

According to Vir Singh Ball, the author of the *Singh Sāgar* completed in January 1828, Guru Gobind Singh died at Nanded due to excessive bleeding after he pulled the stiff bow received from Lahore. In a poetical vein the author tells us that, like Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh also disappeared from under the sheet that was covering his dead body in the presence of a multitude of Sikhs. His light, he says, blended with the Light of God and he went to heaven, the abode of the All-Truth—the *Sach-khand*—and his clothes, like those of Guru Nanak, were cremated according to the prevalent rites. He makes no mention of any wood-cutter, *sadhu* or anyone else seeing him afterwards. Evidently, Vir Singh had no belief in the after-death legends associated with Guru Gobind Singh. For him, death was the end of the Guru's life like that of the first Guru. [*Appendix VIII.*]

The *Prāchīn Panth Prakāsh* by Bhangu Ratan Singh Shahid, completed in 1841 A.D., is mostly devoted to the history of the Sikhs after the death of Guru Gobind Singh to the rise and development of Sikh political power by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Except for a brief account of the Guru period, it primarily deals with those events wherein the author's own ancestors played a prominent part. Since the author confines the account of the Guru at Nanded only to his visit to the hermitage of Bairagi Madho Das and his conversion to Sikhism and departure for the Panjab, the *Prāchīn Panth Prakāsh* contains no reference to the Guru's last commandment and message about future Guruship.

The *Gur-pratāp Sūraj Granth*, popularly known as the *Sūraj Prakāsh*, by Bhai Santokh Singh, completed in 1900 Bikrami, 1843 A.D., is one of the greatest epical compositions of India. It is written on the lines of *Rishī* Valmiki's *Rāmāyana* which the poet had translated earlier in 1891

Bikrami, 1834 A.D. The *Sūraj Prakāsh* deals with the lives of the Sikh Gurus and may be classed as hagiological literature wherein lives and legends are so closely interwoven that they cannot be easily separated. And therein lies the beauty of the art of poetry where prominence is given to imagination and personal idiosyncrasy and not to impartial transcription of historical realities. History is the faithful record of events as they actually took place. It has no place for legends and myths which figure so prominently in the *Sūraj Prakāsh*. They are mostly borrowed from earlier hagiographs and freely expanded by Bhai Santokh Singh with his embellishments in which he hardly has a parallel in the Braj poetry. As such, his account of the last days of Guru Gobind Singh cannot be accepted as truly historical in all its details.

Some time before his death, Guru Gobind Singh is said to have declared that he had transferred his Light to the Khalsa—that the *Gurū* was *Khālsā* and the *Khālsā* was the *Gurū*. The Guru, fully dressed and armed, then walked to the place of cremation and mounted the pyre. But the flaming fire did not touch his body. He then, like the supernatural yogis of old, produced fire (*Yog-agnī*) from within himself and set out for heaven where he was welcomed and received by all the ancient Hindu gods. This happened, says the poet, on Katik *Sudī* 5, 1765 Bikrami, October 6-7, 1708 A.D.

After the departure of the Guru for heaven, the great poet also narrates the stories of his having been seen in the neighbouring jungle by a wood-cutter and a *sādhū*. In doing so he has only repeated the legends of the earlier writers like Koer Singh and Sukha Singh.

It will be interesting to note here that, unlike, all other writers on the subject, the author of the *Sūraj Prakāsh* mentions the installation of the Holy Book, the *Gurū Granth Sahib*, as *Gurū* during the last days of Guru Har Krishan as also of the *Bābā* of Bakālā. [*Rās* 10, *Ansū* 51, No. 26-29; *Ansū* 55, No. 20-23.]

Munshi Sant Singh, a *vakīl* of the Bedis, wrote an account of the Bedi family of Una under the title of the



*Bayān-i-Khāndān-i-Karāmat Nishān-i-Bedīān* from the time of Guru Nanak to that of Baba Sujān Singh. It was completed in May 1865. The first sixty-five pages of the work are devoted to the account of the Ten Gurus which ends with the death of Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded in 1765 Bikrami, 1708 A.D. According to it :

When on Katik *Sudi* 5, 1765 Bikrami, Guru Gobind Singh was about to die at Nanded in the Daccan, all the Singhs and disciples asked him as to who would be the future Guru. The Guru then said : "Guru Khalsa, Khalsa Guru. He who shall observe the Sikh *rahit* or the rules of conduct and morality and meditation, him know ye to be my very self." Then thinking that there should be a definite centre of faith for all the Sikhs, the Guru with five *paise* and a coco-nut in his hand (as offering) bowed before the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* and said : "Ye all community should recognize the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as the *Gurū* after me and obey the commandments contained therein." And then he uttered the following couplet :

ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਮਾਨਿਯੋ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੀ ਦੇਹ ।  
ਜੋ ਸਿਖ ਮੁਹਿ ਮਿਲਬੇ ਚਹੈ ਖੋਜ ਇਸੀ ਮੈ ਲੋਹ ॥

[ Pp. 64-65, *Appendix IX.*]

Recognize the *Gurū Granth* as the visible body of the *Gurū*.  
The Sikh who wishes to meet me should find me therein.

In this the author of the *Bayān* has reiterated the last commandment of Guru Gobind Singh in the words of his contemporary and well-known disciple Bhai Nand Lal who was present at Nanded at the time of the Guru's death. There could be no better and more reliable authority than him on the subject.

The author of the *Bayān* is all devotion and praise for Baba Sahib Singh Bedi of Una, whom he has called *Gurū Sāhib* throughout his book. He also tells us that, according to Guru Gobind Singh's promise, he was reborn in the house of Baba Kaladhari Bedi as his grandson—Sahib Singh. [pp.57-8, 66.] But in spite of it, Munshi Sant Singh does not claim formal Guruship for him in place of the Tenth Guru who, he says, had formally declared the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* to be the *Gurū* after him. Born in 1756 A.D., within forty-eight years of the Tenth Guru's death and being the most respected Sikh of his time, commanding overwhelming influence

with the Sikh Sardars, Rajas and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he had a better chance than all the later pretenders. Baba Sahib Singh, however, preferred to be an humble disciple, a *Sikh* of Guru Gobind Singh—a *Khālsā*—than to pretend to be an equal of his. In 1780 he presented himself at Dera Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur and received *Khande kī Pāhul*, the *Amrit* of the *Khālsā*, there. According to the *Bayān*, Baba Sahib Singh was the first of the Bedis to receive the Khalsa baptism which he himself later on administered from time to time to a large number of Sikhs throughout the country.

We now come to the last two important Sikh poets of the nineteenth century, Bawa Sumer Singh and Giani Gian Singh. Bawa Sumer Singh is the author of the *Pothī Gūr-bilās kī* which was completed in 1873 and published in 1882 A.D. Therein he tells us in unambiguous language that, when the Guru was preparing for his death, he told the Sikhs present that he was placing the Khalsa in the lap of the Almighty God and that he would ever be present in the Khalsa. He then declared that *Gurū Granth Sāhib* would be the *Guru* after him. After this he departed for heaven—*prabhu pralok pramanā* [p. 704]. The formal installation of the *Gurū Granth Sahib* is again repeated on page 706. [Appendix XI.]

Then begin the poetical flights of the author who, in the words of Babu Jagannath Das *Ratnākar* of Ayodhia, was one of foremost poets of Braj-bhasha of his days. He has not only improved upon the legends about the wood-cutter, the Udasi *sadhu* and the Rai brothers of Janwara, mentioned by Bhai Suka Singh in his *Gur-bilās*, but has also added to them two more legends about the supernatural visits of Guru Gobind Singh to Birat in Peshawar area and to a place known as Kotha Sahib at a distance of about eight *kos* from Kabul in Afghanistan. But they all, as usual, belong to the dreamland, the world of imagination, or the world beyond, but not to this human world of ours. As such, they are not worthy of the notice of an objective student of history and deserve to be dismissed as incredible fables.

This is, however, part of the art of Brajī and Panjabi poetry. Even in the second decade of the present century a Kooka poet Bhai Kala Singh Namdhari introduced imaginary supernatural matter in his *Singhān Nāmdhārīān dā Shahīd Bilās* and *Singhān Nāmdhārīān dā Panth Prakāsh* published in 1913 and 1914, respectively. In these he tells us that, in response to the prayer of the Kookas sentenced to death for the murders of butchers, all the Gurus and a number of Sikh martyrs like Bhai Mani Singh, Taru Singh and Sabeg Singh, appeared to them in their last moments at different times in different jails of the Panjab. But they were visible only to the Kooka convicts who formally bowed to them and received their blessings. Nobody else saw them, says the poet. Yet he is relating to us the story of their appearance woven in his account of the Kooka 'martyrs'. Are we to believe, as the poet like his precursors would expect us to, that the Ten Gurus and numerous martyrs were then all alive in flesh and blood like Guru Gobind Singh made by some to be living at Satara and other places after his death? There is, however, a difference in the appearance of the imaginary Guru Gobind Singh to the Maratha dacoits imprisoned in the fort of Satara and the appearance of the Gurus and martyrs to the Kookas in the Panjab jails. While the spirit of the Guru, according to the previous poets' stories, had rescued the dacoits from the fort and had flown them to a place of safety in the Vindhyaçal mountains over two hundred and eighty miles to the north, those who appeared to the 'Kooka martyrs' only blessed them and then left them to their fate in the hands of the hangmen in the jails. [*Shahīd Bilās*, pp. 50-51; *Panth Prakāsh*, 86, etc.]

Giani Gian Singh, the author of the *Panth Prakāsh* (1880 A. D.) and the *Tawārīkh Gurū Khālsā* (1891-92 A.D.) in Urdu and Panjabi, however, belongs to a different class of poets. History is his main objective and he has used poetry as a medium of expression as was the vogue at his time. And, for the purpose of recitation in large assemblies, poetry alone is the proper medium. To be an impressive poet, one must have a forceful language and a fertile imagination.

Giani Gian Singh possessed both in ample measure. As a scholar of ancient Hindu mythology, he believed in the Guru having gone to heaven bodily along with his horse and accepted the legend of the Guru having been seen by four *sādhūs* from the Panjab. To satisfy the inquisitive and sorrowful Sikhs, Gian Singh refers them, in the words of Bhai Daya Singh, one of the *Pānj Pyārās*, to the old legend about the first Guru Nanak also having disappeared in the same supernatural way to go to heaven. According to the poet, Guru Gobind Singh was welcomed to heaven not only by the ancient Hindu gods but also by the previous Sikh Gurus. [*Panth Prakāsh*, second edition, Chast ma-i-Nur Press, Amritsar, 1889 A. D., pp. 284-85.] However, as the author tells us, Guru Gobind Singh before his death formally installed the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as the future *Guru* of the Sikhs. [*Ibid.* 282, 283, 287, *Appendix XII* (a).] With full faith in the death of the Guru, the Sikhs present at Nanded, in spite of their having heard the story of the *sādhūs*, etc., which they did not evidently believe, performed the *Bhog* ceremony of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* on the tenth day of the Guru's death with all the prevalent rites. [*Ibid.* 287.] This has been repeated and confirmed by Giani Gian Singh in all the subsequent editions of his *Panth Parkāsh*, and we find it mentioned in almost the same words in its sixth edition [pp. 316-318, 321] published in October 1923.

The most significant thing of the *Panth Prakāsh* (6th edition) is that it altogether rejects the supernatural legends and makes no mention of the Guru's *darshan* by the wood-cutter and *sadhus* or of the help rendered by the Guru's spirit to the Maratha captives in the fort of Satara, nor does it say anything about Birat (Peshawar) or the Kotha Sahib near Kabul.

With the turn of the century and dawn of scientific spirit and attitude and the development of the sense of historical objectivity, Giani Gian Singh came to realize that his works with imaginary stories of miracles, legends, etc., associated with the names of the Sikh Gurus and saints which he had blindly copied from previous writers—*main mārī mākhī par*



*mākhī*, as he himself puts it—were not wholly acceptable to objective students and scholars of history. He, therefore, readily revised his *Panth Prakāsh* and issued a new edition of it, leaving out fanciful myths and accretions.

The latest manuscript of the *Panth Prakāsh* prepared by Giani Gian Singh towards the end of his life for publication by Hafiz Qutb-ud-Din of Lahore is also free from the above legends (pp. 105 a-b, No. 59-73).

In addition to the several editions of the Giani's *Panth Prakāsh*, we have a number of editions of his *Tawārikh Gurū Khālsā*, first published at Sialkot in 1891 A.D. Therein also we find no mention of the legends referred to above, while there is a clear mention of Guru Gobind Singh having formally installed the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as *Gurū* after him. [*Vide* part I, p. 356.]

As we have seen above, all the contemporary records and early accounts written by the Sikhs up to the end of the nineteenth century refer to the death of Guru Gobind Singh and cremation of his body at Nanded on Katik *Sudi* 5, 1765, Bikrami as indisputable historical facts. There is only the difference of style of language used by different writers. While the objective historians and the writers of official memoirs and *Akhhārs* use a straightforward and businesslike language, the poetic hagiographers indulge in figurative phraseology.

As the words like *mirtū* and *maut* (death) are considered to be blunt when used for saints and sages, the Sikh writers have used refined and polished words and phrases like *pralok gamne*, *Dev-lok padhāre*, *joti jot samāne*, *alop bhae* (went to the other world, went to the land of gods, light blended with the Light, disappeared to heaven), etc., etc. Even in ordinary language the words *swarg vās huā* (has gone to heaven) are used for *mar gayā* (has died). This is not peculiar to Panjabi and Urdu, but to all oriental languages. In Persian and Urdu also, words like *intiqāl* (transfer, migration), *rehlat* (march, departure), *marahamat* (God's mercy), etc., are used for death, and *marhūm*, *ān jahāni*, *bihishtī* (taken in God's mercy, other-worldly, of heavenly) are used for the deceased. As such, the

words used by Sikh poets and hagiographers in the *Gur-bilās* the *Sūraj Parkāsh*, the *Panth Parkāsh*, etc., have no other meaning except referring to the natural death of the Guru. As to the stories of the Guru having been seen, after his death and cremation, by a wood-cutter or an Udasi *sādhū* or of his mysterious visits to the fort of Satara and other places, they are nothing more than unhistorical baseless legends created out of the fertile imagination of poets, who have borrowed their ideas from ancient Hindu mythology, Christian and Muslim hagiographs and from earlier Sikh *Janam-sākhīs*. They are things unreal, untruthful and unhistorical on the very face of them and deserve to be ignored.

The disappearance of the Guru's *kumait* or bay horse from his stable at the time of the Guru's cremation also seems to be a part of the legend. But even if it were a fact, it lends no support to the bodily disappearance of the Guru from the burning pyre or from the cremation enclosure.

#### 7. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE ON THE GURU'S LAST DAYS AND DEATH

Having referred to official records, contemporary works and hagiological literature, we now come to historical works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries based on the information available to, or collected by, professional historians. They are either in Persian or in English. The works written by Indian scholars, both Hindu and Muslim, are in Persian while those of the Europeans are in English. As almost all the Indian writers belonged to the Panjab or its neighbourhood, they had either lived amongst the Sikhs as neighbours or had close associations with them in day-to-day life. As such, most of them had firsthand knowledge of the prevalent beliefs, practices and ceremonies of the Sikhs and could, therefore, speak with a certain amount of authority. Some of them might have differed with the Sikhs in matters theological or might as well have had political prejudices against them, but about the broad facts of their history there could be no misgivings. Moreover, as writers, they are expected to be impartial and objective. And to be as near truth as possible, they must have

relevant sources. As the subject under our immediate study here belongs to the prevalent beliefs of the Sikhs through the centuries and is purely historical, their mention in the historical works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries carries special weight with students of history and cannot be ignored by serious scholars.

We have already referred to the contemporary accounts of Mirza Muhammad Harisi's *Ibrat Nāmāh* (1705-19 A.D.). To almost the same period belongs Sayyad Muhammad Qasim Husaini Lahauri's *Ibrat Nāmāh* (1135 al-Hijri, 1722 A.D.) and *Ibrat Maqāl* (1144 A.H., 1731 A.D.) written within fourteen and twenty-three years, respectively, of the death of Guru Gobind Singh. Giving the usual account of the Guru having died of the wound inflicted on him with a *jamdhar*—a dagger—by a Pathan at Nanded, Muhammad Qasim tells us that the Guru's body was cremated by his disciples with aloe and sandalwood according to the necessary Sikh rites. [P. 36, *Appendix XVIII*, iii.]

Rai Chatarman, the author of the *Chahār Gulshan Akhbār-un-Nawādir*, also known as the *Chatar Gulshan* or *Khuālāst-un-Nawādir*, compiled his work in 1759, soon after the death of Mata Sundri about whom, and about Ajit Singh, her adopted son, and Mata Sahib Devi, he seems to be well informed. According to him, the Pathan's dagger put an end to the Guru's life. "As declared by Guru Nanak," says he, "there are Ten persons [to be recognized]. These Ten *khalīfāhs* (Gurus) are called *Das Mahāl*. Anyone else sitting on the *gaddi* after them is not acceptable to them (the Sikhs). Some recognize him", Ajit Singh, the adopted son of Mātā Sundri. He was later disowned by Mātā Sundri. [Pp. 35-36, *Appendix XVIII*, iv.]

In the *Majmā-ul-Akhbār* (1214-20 A.H., 1799-1805 A.D.), its author Har Sukh Rai says about Guru Gobind Singh that "He is the *Tenth Mahal* and is the last *Zahūr* (appearance or successor) of Guru Nanak". [p. 481, *Appendix XVIII*, v.]

Muhammad Ali Khan Ansari has to his credit two very



important historical works, the *Tārīkh-i-Muzaffarī*, (1225 A.H., 1810 A.D.) and the *Tārīkh-i-Bahr-ul-Mawwāj*, carrying the history of the Mughals to the beginning of the reign of Akbar Shah II (1806-37 A.D.). These works deal extensively with the struggles of the Sikhs against the Mughals and Durranis and are considered to be important sources on the history of the Panjab during the eighteenth century. Before the end of Guru Gobind Singh's account, Muhammad Ali Khan writes that "after him (Guru Gobind Singh), according to the faith of these people (the Sikhs), the descending of Guruship and of internal spiritualism came to an end and the book, the *Granth*, was established in place of the *Gurū*. [*Tārīkh-i-Muzaffarī*, p. 152; *Bahr-ul-Mawwāj*, p. 208, *Appendix XVIII*, vi.]

At the same time in 1810 A.D. (1225 A.H.) was completed Ahmed bin Muhammad Ali's *Mirat-ul-Ahwāl-i-Jahān Numā*. According to it, "the sons of Guru Gobind had been killed in the battle of Alamgir. *After him there is no khalīfah* (successor, Guru)." [*Appendix XVIII*, vii.]

This was the time when Maharaja Ranjit Singh had been on the throne of Lahore for some eleven years. He had occupied the traditional capital of the Panjab in 1799 A.D. and had fully established himself as the undisputed *Maharaja* of the Land of the Five Rivers. He had not only been accepted as such by a number of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh chieftains but had also been recognized by the greatest foreign power in India, the British East India Company, which had entered into a political treaty with him. This attracted the attention of a number of British and Indian scholars who wrote historical works devoted exclusively to the Sikhs. A few pamphlets, it is true, had also been written on the Sikhs in the eighteenth century by men like Antoine L. H. Polier (1780), William Franklin (1798-1803), etc., but they were too sketchy to contain any detailed account of the Sikh Gurus. George Forster alone has referred to the Gurus in his Letter No. XI of 1783 in his *A Journey from Bengal to England* and says :

Govind Sing was assassinated during this expedition [of



Emperor Bahadur Shah to the Deccan] by a Pathan soldier and he died of his wounds in 1708 at the town of Nandere without leaving any male issue; and a tradition delivered to the Sicques, limiting their priests to the number of ten, induced them to appoint no successors to Govind Sing.

[Vol. I, pub. 1798, p. 263.]

Talking about the change in the inscription on the Sikh coins, Major James Browne has casually referred to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh as the first and the last Gurus of the Sikhs, respectively, and has indirectly given us the confirmed belief of the Sikhs of about 1787-88. He says in his *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks*, published in 1788 :

...but after they had been current about fifteen years, the grand Diet of the Sick chiefs (called *Goormuttā*) determined to call in all those rupees, and to strike them in the names of *Gooroo Nanuck* and *Gooroo Gobind Singh*, the first and last of their *Gooroos* or religious leaders. [ Pp. vi-vii.]

In referring to the historians of the nineteenth century, we would prefer to mention at first the Indian writers who should presumably be better informed about the Sikh Gurus than Europeans. It may, however, be mentioned that some of the Indian writers wrote their books at the instance of Europeans who were at this time feeling interested in the history and religion of the Sikhs with whom they expected to come in close political contact in the near future. For this purpose they desired to obtain as correct and reliable information as possible.

Khushwaqt Rai's *Tārīkh-ī-Sikhān*, also called the *Kitāb-i-Tawārīkh-i-Panjāb*, was written in 1811. Therein he says that "at Afzal (Abchal) Nagar [Nanded] the Guru purchased a piece of land and moved in all happiness from this transitory world to the world Eternal. The disciples of the Guru collected from all sides and cremated his dead body with aloe and sandalwood with all the necessary rites. This event, that is his death, took place on Katik *Sudi* 5, 1765 Bikrami. The generation (of Gurus) of Guru Nanak up to Guru Gobind Singh came to an end. [Pp. 36 b -37 a, *Appendix XVIII*, viii.]

In 1233 al-Hijri, 1817-18 A.D. was completed Ahmed Shah Batāliā's *Tawārīkh-i-Hind : Bayān-i-Ahwāl-i-Mulk-i-Hind-wa-Malūk-i-ān az Zamān-i-qadīm tā 1233 Hijrī*, a part of which, the *Zikr-i-Gurūān wa ibtidā-i-Singhān wa Mazhab-i-eshān*, forms an appendix to *Daftar* I and II of the *Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh* by Munshi Sohan Lal Suri. In it Ahmed Shah tells us that Guru Gobind Singh, who had accompanied Emperor Bahadur Shah to the Deccan, died at Nanded in 1765 Bikrami, 1708 A.D., and that the place was known as Abchal Nagar. He says that some Sikhs also lived there, and that the Nizam of Hyderabad had fixed a daily allowance for them. In addition to it, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also made handsome donations for the upkeep of the sanctuary and the maintenance of its custodians. [P. 11, *Appendix XVIII*, ix.]

The *Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh* of Lala Sohan Lal Suri is a very important work on the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors up to 1849. Although its first volume dealing with the Guru and the Misal periods was published in 1885, it was originally begun in the form of notes somewhere in the middle of the eighteenth century during the time of Sohan Lal Suri's grandfather and father Lala Hakumat Rai and Lala Ganpat Rai. It tells us that during the last moments of Guru Gobind Singh's life a disciple of his asked him as to whom he had appointed as *Gurū* after him. Thereupon the Guru replied that "the *Gurū* is *Granth jī*. There is no difference between the *Granth* and the *Gurū*. From the *darshan* of *Granth jī* one shall have the happy *darshan* of the *Gurū Sāhib*." [Vol. I, pp. 64-65 *Appendix XVIII*, x.]

So intense was the faith of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Guru Gobind Singh and so ardent was his desire to raise a befitting memorial on his last resting place at Nanded that he occasionally sent large sums of money and a number of his men for the purpose all the way from the Pānjab. The name of one Sardar Chanda Singh is mentioned in the *Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh* (Vol. III, part iii, p. 355) as having been deputed by him on the 1st of Magh, 1893 Bikrami, to proceed to Abchal-nagar with twenty-five thousand rupees, with promise to remit

more money, for the renovation and construction of buildings of the Sach-khand gurdwara there. [Also see *ibid.*, III, iii, 77, 187, 267, 455.]

Ratan Chand Bāl, the author of the *Khālīs Nāmāh* (1846 A. D., p. 13-14a) and Ganesh Das Badehra of the *Chār Bāgh-i-Panjāb* (1855 A.D., p. 118) also confirm the information about the death of the Guru. [*Appendix XVIII*, xi.]

Ghualm Muhy-ud-Din *alias* Bute Shah in his *Tārikh-i-Panjāb* of 1848, (p. 206) and Mufti Ali-ud-Din in his *Ibrat Nāmāh* of 1854 (vol. I, p. 178) have both mentioned the death of the Guru as an historical fact. Bute Shah in his abridged recension of the *Tārikh-i-Panjāb* (preserved in the Panjab Public Library, Lahore) has, like Lala Sohan Lal's *Umdat-ut-Tawārikh*, recorded the last commandment of the Guru regarding the *Granth* being the *Gurū* after his death, saying that "there is no difference between the *Gurū* and the *Granth*." [P. 62, *Appendix XVIII*, xii a,b.]

The last Persian work to be referred to on the subject is Kanhaiya Lal Hindi's *Zafar Nāmāh-i-Ranjit Singh* published at Lahore in 1876. In the introductory pages, he has given a sketch of the Gurus, at the end of which he says that "Guru Gobind Singh died at Abchala Nagar (Nanded in the Deccan) in 1765 Bk. and that no one (of his disciples) succeeded him to the (throne of *Gurūship*). With him ended the *gaddi* of leadership (*masnad-i-sarwarī*) and with him came to an end the custom of the (succession of) Gurus (*shewā-i-rāhbari*). [P. 52, *Appendix XVIII*, xiii.]

European writers on history are generally more objective and precise and those who have written on the Sikhs in the first half of the nineteenth century were seasoned scholars like Sir John Malcolm, the Hon'ble W.G. Osborne, Dr. W. L. M'Gregor and Captain Joseph D. Cunningham. The last of them incurred the displeasure of the British Indian Government and lost his political appointment for his frank and honest observations in his *History of the Sikhs*. All of them had been in close contact with the Sikhs in the Panjab and may be safely relied upon for their information on the historicity of Guru Gobind Singh's

death, of his being the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs and of his declaration and commandment regarding *Gurū Granth Sāhib* being the *Gurū* after him. We would, therefore, quote here only the relevant passages from their works without going into any particulars about them, following only the chronological order of their publications.

Malcolm, Lt.-Col., *Sketch of the Sikhs*, London, 1812.

Guru Govind was the last acknowledged religious ruler of the Sikhs. A prophecy had limited their spiritual guides to the number of ten ... [p.76].

This sect, as has been before stated, have never admitted a spiritual leader since the death of Guru Govind [p. 89].

Osborne, W. G., *The Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh*, London, 1840.

The tenth and the last of their spiritual leaders was called Gooro Govind, whose plans of ambition were different from those of his predecessor Nanak [p. xiv].

... We accordingly set the old Faqueer Uzeez-ooden to work with him, and much to our satisfaction heard, in the course of the evening, that on his mentioning our wishes to the Maharajah, he had consulted the *Granth*, or sacred volume of the Sikhs, and that, as the oracle was propitious, we might be prepared to set off for Lahore in four days' time [p. 12]. Runjeet Singh rarely undertakes any expedition of importance without consulting this holy book...[p. 122].

*The History of the Sikhs*, 1846 (Calcutta).

Guru Govind was the last acknowledged religious ruler of the Sikhs. A prophecy had limited their spiritual guides to the number of ten...[p. 86].

This sect, as has been before stated have never admitted a spiritual leader since the death of Guru Govind [p. 92].

M'Gregor, W. L., *The History of the Sikhs*, London, 1846, vol. I.

The wound was sewed up, and, to all appearance, healing, but Govind was determined to die. He called for a strong bow, which he bent with all his force, and in doing so the stitches of his wound gave way, his bowels again protruded, and he died almost immediately [p. 100].

This event occurred in the year of the Hijera 1132, Samwat 1765, and A. D. 1708, at the city of Nadshur [Nanded], in the reign of Buhadoor Shah [p. 100].



Aware that since the death of his brave sons there was none among his adherents capable of following up his views and conquests, he fixed upon a Byragee fukeer, named Bunda, who became his successor, though not as Gooroo. That title died with Gobind Singh, the tenth and last [p. 104].

Cunningham, J. D., *History of Sikhs*, 1849.

The expiring Gooroo was childless, and the assembled disciples asked in sorrow who should inspire them with truth and lead them to victory when he was no more. Govind bade them be of good cheer; the appointed Ten had indeed fulfilled their mission, but he was about to deliver the Khalsa to God, the never-dying. "He who wishes to behold the Gooroo, let him search the Granth of Nanak. The Gooroo will dwell with the Khalsa: be firm and faithful; wherever five Sikhs are gathered together, there will I also be present [p. 88].

Gobind was killed in 1708 at Nuderh on the banks of the Godavery [pp. 88-89].

Bowering, Lewin B., *Eastern Experiences*, 1872.

The cruel massacre at Sirhind of two of the sons of Guru Govind Singh, the tenth and the last teacher, who, before he died in the Dekkan of a broken heart, inflamed the minds of his followers to a determined and prolonged resistance to the Moghal rule [p. 273].

... With him terminated the succession of the Sikh priests, but the warlike qualities which he implanted in the breasts of his followers continued to flourish [p. 320].

Trumpp, Ernest, *The Adi Granth*, 1877.

The Guru felt that his dissolution was near at hand, and ordered his Sikhs to keep ready wood [for cremation] and shroud. Having done so they all joined their hands and asked "O true Guru, whom will you seat, for the sake of our welfare, on the throne of the Guruship?" He answered: "As the nine Kings before me were at the time of their death seating another Guru on their throne, so shall I now not do. I have entrusted the whole society (of the disciples) to the bosom of the timeless, divine male. After me you shall everywhere mind the book of the *Granth-Sahib* as your Guru; whatever you shall ask, it will show to you. Whoever be my disciple, he shall consider the *Granth* as the form of the Guru.

... Having uttered these verses he closed his eyes and expired A.D. 1708 [pp. xcv-xcvi].

The last important writer of the nineteenth century on the history of the Panjab in English is Syed Muhammad Latif,

of the Panjab Judicial Service. His well known book the *History of the Panjab* was published in 1891 and is still one of the best books on the subject. Some time before the death of Guru Gobind Singh when Sikhs asked him as to who would be Guru after him, the dying apostolic hero, according to Syed Muhammad Latif, told them :

"I entrust my Khalsa to the bosom of the ever-lasting divine being. Whoever wishes to behold the Guru, let him offer *karāh parshād* worth Re 1-4 or less, and bow before the *Granth* and open it, and he shall be given an interview with the Guru. The *Granth* shall support you under all your troubles and adversities in this world, and be a sure guide to you hereafter. The Guru shall dwell with the society of disciples, the *Khālsā*, and wherever there shall be five Sikhs gathered together, there shall the Guru be also present." The Guru also gave them sundry warnings, telling them that there were impostors in the world who would try to dissuade them from the right path, but that his disciples should be on their guard against them and give no ear to what they say. They must have belief in One God and look on the *Granth* as His inspired law. ... He then closed his eyes and began to pray, and expired in the performance of his devotions [p. 269].

Of the writers of the twentieth century, we would refer only to M.A. Macauliffe, whose book *The Sikh Religion*, in six volumes published in 1909, was begun in the eighties of the nineteenth century and is considered to be a very useful work on the lives of the Gurus and of the Bhaktas whose hymns are incorporated in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. In the compilation of this work, Macauliffe was assisted by a number of well known Sikh scholars of his time like Bhai Hazara Singh, Bhai Sardul Singh, Bhai Dit Singh, and Bha Kahan Singh of Nabha who was closely associated with it up to the last stage of its publication at Oxford in England. The views expressed in *The Sikh Religion*, therefore, represent the views and beliefs not only of the orthodox section of the Sikh community but also of their reformist intelligentsia in the twentieth century. Writing about the last commandments and the death of Guru Gobind Singh, he says :

When the Sikhs came again to take their last farewell of the

Guru, they inquired who was to succeed him. He replied, 'I have entrusted you to the Immortal God. Ever remain under His protection, and trust to none besides. Wherever there are five Sikhs assembled who abide by the Guru's teachings, know that I am in the midst of them. He who serveth them shall obtain the reward thereof, the fulfilment of all his heart's desires. Read the history of your Gurus from the time of Guru Nanak. Henceforth the Guru shall be the Khalsa and the Khalsa the Guru. I have infused my mental and bodily spirit into the Granth Sahib and the Khalsa.'

After this the Guru bathed and changed his dress. He then read the Japji and repeated an Ardas or supplication. While doing so, he gave instructions that no clothes should be bestowed as alms in his name. He then put on a muslin waistband, slung his bow on his shoulder and took his musket in his hand. He opened the Granth Sahib and placing five paise and a coco-nut before it solemnly bowed to it as his successor. Then uttering '*Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa ! Wahiguru ji ki fateh !*' he circumambulated the sacred volume and said, 'O beloved Khalsa, let him who desireth to behold me, behold the Guru Granth. Obey the Granth Sahib. It is the visible body of the Guru. And let him who desireth to meet me diligently search its hymns.'

The Guru went to an enclosure formed of tent walls where his bier had been erected. In the end of the night—a watch before day—he lay on his bier and directed all his Sikhs except Bhai Santokh Singh, who was specially attached to him, to go to their homes. He then gave his last orders to his last attendant. 'Keep my kitchen ever open, and receive offerings for its maintenance. If any one erect a shrine in my honour, his offspring shall perish.' Bhai Santokh Singh represented that the Sikhs were few at Nander, and how were offerings to be obtained? The Guru replied, 'O Bhai Santokh Singh, have patience. Singhs of mine of very great eminence shall come here and make copious offerings. Everything shall be obtained by the favour of Guru Nanak.' He then, in grateful acknowledgement of the spiritual benefactions of the founder of his religion, uttered a Persian distich, the translation of which is :

Gobind Singh obtained from Guru Nanak

Hospitality, the sword, victory, and prompt assistance.

The Guru then breathed his last. The Sikhs made preparations for his obsequies as he had instructed them, the Sohila was

solemnly chanted, and sacred food distributed.

While all were mourning the loss of the Guru a hermit arrived and said, "You suppose that the Guru is dead. I saw him this very morning riding his bay horse. When I bowed to him he said, "Come, O hermit, let me behold thee. Very happy am I that I have met thee at the last moment." I then asked him whither he was wending his way. He smiled and said he was going to the forest on a hunting excursion. He had his bow in his hand, and his arrows were fastened with a strap to his waist.'

The Sikhs who heard this statement arrived at the conclusion that it was all the Guru's play, that he dwelt in uninterrupted bliss, and that he showed himself wherever he was remembered. He had merely come into the world, they said, to make trial of their faith, and remove the ills of existence. Wherefore for such a Guru who had *departed* bodily to heaven, there ought to be no mourning. The ashes of his bier were collected and a platform built over them. The Khalsa, to whom the Guruship had been entrusted, declared that all those who visited the spot should receive due spiritual reward.

The Guru departed from the scene of his earthly triumphs and reverses on Thursday, the fifth day of the bright half of Kartik, Sambat 1765 (A.D. 1708), having exercised spiritual and temporal sovereignty over the Sikhs for three and thirty years, and resided in Nander for fourteen months and ten days. [pp. 243-46].

#### 8. GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNTS — GUR-PRANĀLĪĀN

There is another class of evidence which is particularly relevant to our study here. It is known as the *Gur-pranālīān* or genealogies of the Gurus. As they deal mainly with the parentage, births, deaths, descendants and successors of the Gurus, they are a very useful source of information for determining the order of succession of Guruship. Six of these *Gur-pranālīs* by Bhai Kesar Singh, Poet Saundha, Bhai Gulab Singh, Kavi Ram Singh, an anonymous poet and by Kavi Gulab Singh are available, and all of them, without exception, accept the death of Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded in 1708 as an indisputable historical fact. [Appendix XIII.]

#### 9. CLAIMS OF SCHISMATICS

Signs of schismatic tendencies had appeared in the Sikh community soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh



in the Deccan. He had not appointed, as we know, anyone to take his place as *Gurū* and had, with his last message and commandment to Sikhs to look up to the holy *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as their future guide and *Guru*, put an end to the continuing line of succession. But, as we all know, the lust for power, may it be religious or political, and the lure of unearned wealth, even if it were received as offerings from the faithful devotees for charitable purposes, not unoften, blind the vision and turn the heads of men of not very high calibre. In self-conceitedness they assume or try to assume positions or powers which do not rightly and honestly belong to them. We have two glaring examples of this during the early eighteenth century when Sodhi Gulab Rai and Ajit Singh, the adopted son of *Mātā* Sundri, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh, tried to imitate Guru Gobind Singh and take his place as *Guru*. The former passed away unrecognized by the community and the latter met with an ignominious end.

Then we hear of a number of persons whom the Kukas or Namdharis and some other credulous, clever and exploiting people have from time to time advertised and preached up with dubious motives. It was given out by some of the followers of Baba Sahib Singh Bedi of Una (1813-1891 Bk., A.D. 1756-1834) that he was an incarnation of Guru Gobind Singh having been born, according to a promise given by the Guru to Baba Kaladhari, in the family of the latter. Baba Sahib Singh's father Ajit Singh was the son of Baba Kaladhari. According to a statement of Bhai Lal Singh of Amritsar, a *Gurbhāī* of Baba Ram Singh Namdhari—both being followers of Baba Balak Singh of Hazro—Bhai Maharaj Singh of Naurangabad (originally of Rabbon) was the second incarnation of Guru Gobind Singh, while Baba Ram Singh (1816-1884) was the third. One Bhai Harnam Singh of village Ubba-Mandi in the Patiala state, also, in those very days, proclaimed himself to be Guru Gobind Singh. This is found in the statement of the well-known Kuka Giani Ratan Singh, popularly known as Giani Singh, made by him before the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana on September, 21, 1871. Harnam Singh was

sentenced to five years' imprisonment for creating disturbances in the state while the Giani was sentenced to eighteen months for not quelling them. Giani Ratan Singh was later hanged in connection with the murder of butchers at Raikot in 1871.

In addition to these four so-called *avtārs* of the great Guru, there are two other persons who, according to the Kukas and Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha, had been formally nominated as his successors by Guru Gobind Singh or Baba Ajapal Singh, who was also said by some people in the twentieth century to have been Guru Gobind himself. They were Baba Balak Singh and Baba Sarup Singh, both contemporaries. For Baba Balak Singh, reference is invited to *Nāmdhārī Itihās* by Indar Singh Chakarvarti, part I, pp. 6-7, and for Baba Sarup Singh to the *Panjabi Bhain* of Ferozpur for May 1916.

Thus, there were half a dozen so-called *avtārs* and pseudo-successors of Guru Gobind Singh at one and the same time. This itself is enough to demolish their succession theory. Obviously, the pretensions and claims of all these *avtārs* and so-called Gurus or their sponsors are false and fictitious. If at all, there could be only one successor at a time. The fact is that personal succession came to an end with the last message and commandment of Guru Gobind Singh.

There is no other true Guru after Guru Gobind Singh to be recognized by the Sikhs. The rise and creation of pretenders is not an innovation with some of the Sikh sects alone. These have been there in the older communities of the world as well, and the Sikhs have borrowed them from the ancients. But the fault or responsibility for these false claims and pretensions does not, in all cases, lie with those so presented. In most cases it is the clever disciples who preach them up for their own ends. As an old Persian saying goes : *Peerān namī-*

*parand, murīdān*  
*mī-prānand*

پیران نمی پرند - مریدان می پرانند

—it is not the *peers* who fly, it is the *murids* or their followers who make them fly.

It may be stated here that Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, Bhai Maharaj Singh, Baba Sarup Singh, Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh never put forward any claims for themselves. There is nothing on record in their own hand or under their seals or signatures to show that they ever claimed or proclaimed to have been the *avtārs* or incarnations of Guru Gobind Singh or to have been nominated by him as his successor-Gurus. They were all educated people and had not to depend upon others to do it. On the other hand, whatever direct documentary evidence is available, it unequivocally declares that they were the baptized *Singhs* of the Guru and were his unflinching devotees throughout their lives.

Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, according to Munshi Sant Singh's *Bayān-i-Khāndān-i-Karāmat-nishān-i-Bedīān*, pp. 68-69, was the first amongst the Bedi Sahibzadas to receive the *Khande dī Pahul* at Dera Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur in A.D. 1780 (1837 Bikrami), when he visited that place especially for that purpose. Not only this. His descendants and successors were also regularly baptized (*Amritdhārī*) *Singhs* of the Guru and, in their turn, they administered *Amrit* to thousands of Sikh suppliants who came to them for it. The present head of the family, Baba Madhusudan Singh, is an enthusiastic *Singh* and takes special pride and pleasure in preaching the message of Sikhism and inculcating the *Rahit* or the way of life prescribed for the *Singhs*.

Bhai Maharaj Singh ended his life as a State prisoner in Singapore where he died on July 5, 1856, and left no *gaddi* behind. Baba Sarup Singh confined himself to the custodianship of the Gurdwara Baba Ajapal Singh at Nabha. Baba Balak Singh never once laid claim to Guruship in succession to Guru Gobind Singh and was throughout his life known to, and addressed by, his numerous followers as *Bhāī* or *Bhāī Sāhib* and not as *Gurū*.

#### 10. NO EVIDENCE OF BABA BALAK SINGH'S RELATIONS WITH BABA AJAPAL SINGH

In fact, according to the tradition in the Bhagat family of Rawalpindi, Bhai Balak Singh, from whom Baba Ram Singh



received the *nām-dān*, had received *Gur-mantra* from Sain Sahib Bhagat Jawahir Mall. This finds substantial support in the letter of Baba Balak Singh dated Maghar 18, 1919 Bikrami, December 1, 1862, from Hazro addressed a day before his death to *Bhāi Sāhibji Sāinji* Jawahir Mall *jī* for whom he shows the highest of respect and deepest of devotion, becoming of a disciple towards his guide.

There is also a reference to this letter in *Bhagat Lakshman Singh : Autobiography*, pp. 5-6, saying :

In the letter that Bhai Balak Singh wrote to Sain Sahib on Maghar 18, 1919 Bk., December 1, 1862, some time before his death, he remembers him as if he was Sain Sahib's disciple, and the style and tone of the letter were highly reverential. The Namdharis, followers of Baba Ram Singh, *Keshadhārī* and *Sahjdhārī*, both living in the Attock district and in Swabi Tehsil of the Peshawar (now Mardan) District, worshiped the memory of Sain Sahib even so late as 1889 when I was the Head Master of the Municipal Board School, Hazro. I was 26 years old at the time. The consideration with which I was treated by all that was good there was simply surprising particularly when it is borne in mind that I was not a grandson of Sain Sahib, but that of a brother of his.

The venerable Bhagat Lakshman Singh was a grandson of Bhagat Sohna Mall, the younger brother of Sain Jawahir Mall. He had personally known Bhai Kahan Singh of Hazro, the nephew of Baba Balak Singh and a *Gur-bhāi* of Baba Ram Singh, and also Bhai Dhani Ram, the Namdhari *suba* for Swabi and Attock. He constantly met them in 1888-1889 at the house of Bibi Poorbo, the adopted daughter of Sain Jawahir Mall. He tells us in his note of February 19, 1935, that he had not heard the name of Baba Ajapal Singh from any one of them. [*Jīwan Prītī*, August 1961, p. 15-16, *Appendix XVI*.]

The truth is that the fable of Baba Ajapal Singh's association with Bhai Balak Singh had yet to take some three decades and a half to suggest itself to the imagination of its creators. His name, therefore, could not have been known to the immediate descendants and followers of Baba Balak Singh. It was not known to Bhai Lal Singh of



Amritsar, the second *Gur-bhai* of Baba Ram Singh, nay, not even to Baba Ram Singh himself who in his entire correspondence consisting of over five dozen letters makes no mention of Baba Ajapal Singh at all, much less of his having met and blessed Baba Balak Singh.

The official records of the Government of the Panjab and of the Government of India, who had set up a strong network of spies to get at every detail of the origin, growth and development of the Kuka movement at all its centres—at Hazro, Amritsar and Bhaini—are absolutely silent about Ajapal Singh. The Government had successfully traced the connection not only of the Jagiasi-Abhyasis of Hazro with the Kukas of Bhaini but had also gone a step further in tracing the relationship of Baba Balak Singh, the first prominent leader and originator of the Namdhari movement, to his preceptor Sain Jawahir Mall and placing his sons Bhagat Hiranand and others under police surveillance after a number of Kukas had been blown away from the guns at Maler-Kotla and Baba Ram Singh had been deported to Burma in January 1872. This surveillance continued for a long time and Bhagat Hiranand and his brothers were not only not allowed to move out of their town but had also to report their presence every day at the local police station.

Even after the death of Baba Balak Singh on Maghar 19, 1919 Bk., December 2, 1862, Baba Ram Singh looked upon the sons of *Sāin Sāhib* Jawahir Mall—Bhagat Hiranand and his brothers—with deep reverence and appealed to them in his letter of Assuj 1922 Bk., A.D. 1865, for help in relief from Government harassment by telling them that he (Ram Singh) was their *sewak*—ਜੇ ਕਰ ਤੁਸਾਂ ਪਾਸੋਂ ਕੁਝ ਬਣ ਆਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਅਸਾਡਾ ਪਿੱਛਾ ਛੁਡਾਇ ਦਿਓ, ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਸੇਵਕ ਜਣਾਇ ਦਿਓ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ । ਸਾਲ ੧੮੨੨ ਅਸੂ ਬਿਕਰਮੀ ॥

[*Jīwan Prītī*, August 1961, p. 18; *Appendix XVI*.]

In the face of all this contemporary documentary evidence, including the letters of Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh themselves, conclusively proving their close relationship with Sain Jawahir Mall, it is preposterous to expect students of history to believe in the fable of Baba Ajapal Singh blessing Baba

Balak Singh with *Gurūship*.

If Ajapal Singh had any direct or indirect connection with Balak Singh at any stage in his life, it could not have escaped the investigations of the Panjab Police. And his successors Baba Sarup Singh and Narain Singh would as well have received the attention of the Panjab Government like the sons and successors of Sain Jawahir Mall as mentioned above. The headquarters of Baba Ajapal Singh's successors at Nabha were much nearer to Bhaini in the district of Ludhiana than Hazro in the far off north-west of the Panjab. In spite of it, Baba Sarup Singh and Narain Singh of Nabha were free from Government suspicion. This speaks for itself.

Baba Ajapal Singh, evidently, had no connection with Baba Balak Singh. There is no evidence to suggest it. The *Gur-partap Sūraj Granth* of Santokh Singh, the *Pothī Gur-bilās ki* of Mahant Bawa Sumer Singh and the works of Giani Gian Singh—the *Panth Prakāsh* and the *Tawarīkh Gurū Khālsā*—make no mention of Ajapal Singh. Even Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha, the father of many an indirect dubious suggestion about Baba Ajapal Singh, is silent about his meeting and blessing Baba Balak Singh. On the other hand, in his anonymous article on *Sikh Itihās dā an-likhiā patrā* published in the *Panjābī Bhain* of Ferozpur for May 1816, Bhai Kahan Singh who, according to Bhai Takht Singh, was the author of the article, tells us that during his last moments Baba Ajapal Singh nominated Baba Sarup Singh to be his successor, saying: “This is Bhai Sarup Singh, consider him to be my very self, he has done (me) great service. I install him in my place—ਆਹ ਭਾਈ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਹੈ, ਇਹ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਡਾ ਰੂਪ ਸਮਝਣਾ, ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਸੇਵਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੀ ਥਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਨੂੰ ਥਾਪਦੇ ਹਾਂ ॥

The article referred to above was written and published within a few days of the death of Bhai Kahan Singh's father Bhai Narain Singh on Baisakh 20, 1773 Bk., May 1, 1916. Bhai Narain Singh, son of Bhai Gurdial Singh, was the grandson and successor of Baba Sarup Singh, the great-grandfather of Bhai Kahan Singh. With the nomination and installation of Bhai Sarup Singh as his successor by Baba

Ajapal Singh himself just before his death in A.D. 1812, the question of the appointment of anyone else, including Bhai Balak Singh, as the successor of Baba Ajapal Singh does not arise. This knocks out all ground from under the story put up by the Namdharis and reduces it to nothing more than fiction.

We have available to us the *Pothī Sardhā Pūran Bhāī Bālak jī kī Siharfī* written and published by one of his devoted disciples, Bhai Shauqa Ram, in 1869 (completed on Bhadon Sudi 15, Puran-mashi, 1926 Bikrami, September 20, 1869), within seven years of the death of the saint on December 2, 1862. It was also later on published by Sardar Shamsher Singh Ashok in the *Panj Daryā*, Jullundur, for October 1957. With all his overflowing devotion for his worshipful master, Shauqa Ram, throughout the *Pothī*, remembers Baba Balak Singh as *Bhāī* or *Bhāī Sāhib*. With the same respectful word, he mentions Baba Ram Singh Namdhari who is recorded therein to have met at Wazirabad, on the bank of the river Chenab, the procession of the ashes of Bhai Balak Singh being taken to the Ganges at Hardwar. It is apparent, therefore, that the use of the word *Guru* for Bhai Balak Singh or for Bhai Ram Singh had not yet been introduced into the Jagiasi-Abhyasi or Namdhari followers of these saints. It came later and was, evidently, an innovation unauthorized by Bhai Balak Singh.

The story of Guru Gobind Singh having blessed Baba Balak Singh and through him, Baba Ram Singh, with Guruship is as baseless and historically as incorrect and untenable as the suggestion of Baba Ajapal Singh of Nabha being Guru Gobind Singh having lived for one hundred and four years after his death at Nanded in October 1708. There is no evidence of any of the two having ever met Bhai Balak Singh.

The notes of Bhagat Lakshman Singh published in the *Jīwan Prītī* for August 1961 and his *Autobiography* (pp. 3-6), referred to above [Appendix XVI], and the article of Sardar Narotam Singh, Barrister-at-Law, Abbotabad, published in the *Khālsā Samāchār*, Amritsar, for August 1, 1940, and



December 5, 1940 [*Appendix XVII*], may be studied with advantage for information on the relations between Sain Jawahar Mall, Bhai Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh.

The notes of Bhagat Lakshman Singh dated February 19, March 8-10, and May 25, 1936 [*Appendix XVI*] were written, evidently, as a reaction to the misleading statements of Sri Chakaravrti about the relations between Sain Jawahir Mall, Bhai Balak Singh and Baba Ajapal Singh in his *Namdhari Itihas*, part I, dealing with the life of Bhai Balak Singh, published in 1991 Bk., 1934 A.D. Sardar Narotam Singh, Barrister, however, tells us in clear words that he had written his articles published in the *Khalsa Samachar* of August 1 and December 5, 1940, with a view to placing before his readers true facts about these saints and disabusing the minds of those who might have been misled by the *Namdhari Itihas*. These facts, said he, could be verified from Bhagat Bishan Das (grandson of Sain Jawahir Mall) who was then living at Rawalpindi and was about eighty-eight years old. Both Bhagat Lakshman Singh and Sardar Narotam Singh, by virtue of their close relationship with Sain Sahib's family, were decidedly more knowledgeable than the author of the above book, and their statements are, without doubt, more truthful and reliable. The fact, as we have it from them, and is also supported by the letter of Bhai Balak Singh himself, reproduced in original in *Appendix XVII*, is that Sain Jawahir Mall, and not Baba Ajapal Singh, was the preceptor of Bhai Balak Singh. According to Bhai Kahan Singh, Baba Ajapal Singh at no stage figured in the rise and development of the Namdhari movement. All that was known to him about Ajapal Singh from 1754 (1811 Bk.) to 1812 through his father (1861-1916), based on the information of Baba Sarup Singh (1812-1861), has been recorded by him in his articles on the subject. There is no mention anywhere in them, or in his earlier or later works, of Baba Ajapal Singh having ever met Bhai Balak Singh. Baba Ajapal Singh has been introduced into the life-story of Bhai Balak Singh by Namdhari publicists obviously to push back the date of the origin of their movement to the beginning of



the nineteenth century or to the first decade of the eighteenth century when Guru Gobind Singh died at Nanded in 1708, or, perhaps, to a still earlier date, the last decade of the seventeenth century, when the Guru created the Khalsa in 1699. But all this can suggest itself to the fictionists and not to the votaries of objective history.

In the interest of historical research and scrutiny, it would be greatly appreciated if any scholar could point to any authority of the eighteenth or of the first decade of the nineteenth century that Guru Gobind Singh or Baba Ajapal Singh ever visited Hazro where Baba Balak Singh had spent most of his life.

It may be mentioned here that in February 1928 an imaginary picture printed at the F. W. Press, Ramgali, Lahore, and published by the Kukas showing Guru Gobind Singh as bestowing *Gurūship* on Baba Balak Singh was confiscated by the Government of the Panjab and its further publication was prohibited under section 295 of the Indian Penal Code. [*Aslī Qaumī Dard*, Amritsar, February 18, 1928, p. 1.]

#### 11. BABA RAM SINGH'S FAITH IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

It is true that some of the followers of Baba Ram Singh had taken to the practice of some of the Bedis and Sodhis and, in their excessive zeal, had started calling him *Gurū*. It is also true that Baba Ram Singh had come to entertain some belief in the predictions of the *Sau-Sākhī* or One Hundred Stories about Sikh Gurus and hoped for the re-establishment of the Sikh rule in the Panjab. On the question of his *Gurūship*, however, he knew it for certain and had no doubt in his mind that he was *not a Gurū* in succession to Guru Gobind Singh. Like a true saint and a noble soul that he was, he repudiated it in clear words whenever he was referred to as *Gurū* by his followers. He wrote to them again and again in his letters, declaring and praying :

...Make me, O Lord, always obey that Commandment of yours that You, having assumed the form of the Guru, have issued in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*.

...Save me always, O Lord, from faithlessness (*be-mukhī*). Be-mukhi means to turn away from the order of the Guru ...

What have I to say ? 'This has been said in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* throughout. Man's is only to beg. The granter is the Guru ...

...I am like a watchman (*barwālā*). The *raptiā* (the village watchman, a reporter) is not an important person...Cheta *Vadī* year 1931 [March, 1874]. ... (4)

...What I write is the order of the Guru. I am not the Guru. I am like a *raptiā* (a village reporter, watchman). Whosoever shall obey shall be happy ... Chetra *Vadī* 2, 1931 [March 5, 1874] ... (10)

...The order of the previous ones is also the same that All-powerful have been the Ten Gurus. I also proclaim their commandments. I am not the Guru ... (5)

...Jwala Dei, you should be busy with meditation night and day and recite the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* always. ... (17)

...I do not have anything of the Guruship in me, not even as much as a hair. ... (20)

...Do not write any letter to Dalip Singh. He has eaten beef. What can he do for us ? Apply to the Guru. Why apply to anyone else ?

...If I had any (hidden) power, why should I myself have been put in prison. ... All powers are in the divine Name and in the Guru. So meditate on Him. The Guru of Gurus is the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. Wherever anyone will recognize the Word-Guru, there shall come all goodness. Know this to be true (18).

...I have no desire to become Guru, nor I am the Guru. I am only a *Hukmī-bandā* (an obeying man). People have unnecessarily raised opposition to me. ... (21)

...I am not the Guru. I am like a *raptiā* (a village watchman).

...Again and again pray to the Guru : "O Guru, have your command obeyed which you have recorded in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*." (p. 25)

...See the ways of the Lord Creator and what he brings about.

...The *Gurū Granth Sāhib* alone is to be recognized as the visible body of the Gurus. 'The Sikh who wishes to meet me (says Guru Gobind Singh) should seek me therein'. The Guru has also written : "The Word is the Guru, the Guru is the Word. In the Word are all elixirs. Whatever the Word commands, disciple should obey, and verily the Guru will emancipate him."... (46)

...I am not the Guru. I am only a dog at the gate of the Guru. I also pray all the eight *pahar* (night and day) : "O Guru, I am under Thy protection. Save me from unbelief (*be-mukhī*). Pray save me from faithlessness and self-conceitedness (*be-sidqi*,

*manmukhī*). *Be-sīdqī* is disobedience of the Guru's commands. ... Harb *Vadi* 1, 1937 [Bk., June 23, 1880] [p. 49-50.]

You pay attention to the words of the Guru. The *Gurū Granth Sāhib* is the visible embodiment of the Guru. (57).

...And brother, after the Ten Gurus, *Mahārāj ji* [Guru Gobind Singh] has installed the *Gurū Granth Sahib* as the Guru who is permanent for all times. There is no other Guru. ... (55)

There could be no more frank, honest and truthful statements of the faith and beliefs of Baba Ram Singh than those recorded by him in his own letters, popularly known amongst the Kukas as *Hukam-nāme*, written from his exile to his brother and prominent followers. Copies of a number of them were received from Sri Baba Partap Singh ji by *Kavirāj Sant* Tehal Singh of Deska, district Sialkot, who published a selection therefrom under the title of *Hukam nāmē*, with an introduction by Giani Sher Singh, Managing Director, the *Sikh Sewak*, Amritsar.

I can say from personal knowledge that Maharaj Baba Partap Singh (second in succession from Baba Ram Singh), whom I had the honour of meeting a number of times at Amritsar, Bhaini Sahib and other places during the years 1931-59, was an unassuming noble soul and a devoted follower of Guru Gobind Singh and of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. But at times he was helpless before his secretaries and supporters like Nidhan Singh Alam and Indar Singh Chakarvarti who had of themselves become the keepers of his conscience and were, in fact, the influences behind all the schismatic tendencies and innovations that came to be introduced into the Kuka or Namdhari community during the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century.

I vividly recollect how during one of Baba Partap Singh's visits to the house of Professor Teja Singh, at the Khalsa College, Amritsar, the host asked the guest in all solemnity in the course of their conversation on religious topics whether he (Baba Partap Singh) was really Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh, as was being claimed by some of his followers. (It was at this moment that I happened to drop unannounced into the *baithak*, or living-room, of the

Professor who was a close friend of mine and there existed no formality between ourselves.) Baba Partap Singh spontaneously and emphatically spoke out : "O Baba, O Baba, I am not even the dust of your feet. But what am I to do with these. ... " (He was pointing out to the people sitting outside in the lawn.) The exact words used by Baba Partap Singh were: "ਓ ਬਾਬਾ, ਓ ਬਾਬਾ, ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਤੇਰੇ ਚਰਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਧੂੜ ਬੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਪਰ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ...ਨੂੰ ਕੀ ਕਰਾਂ?"

This was exactly like Baba Partap Singh who was an embodiment of frankness and humility. It is indeed a strange quirk of history that during his time the Kuka movement drifted away from its moorings. Baba Partap Singh had full faith in Nidhan Singh Alam and Indar Singh Chakarvarti who assumed unto themselves the roll of public relations men and historians. Drawing more upon the fertility of their imaginations, they presented a distorted picture of the Kuka order and with a view to building up the new cult ignored the beliefs and wishes of their revered leader Baba Ram Singh as expressed in his letters and commandments. Of late, one Sardar Tarn Singh Wahmi, following in the footsteps of Alam and Chakarvarti, has published a book called *Srī Gurū Gobind Singh jī dā Nanderon bād dā Jīwan* (HOLA 2019 Bk., March 1963). In this book the author has made an unsuccessful attempt to prove with the help of fables and imaginary stories that Guru Gobind Singh did not die at Nanded in October 1708 but came to the Panjab in disguise and lived at Nabha where he died in 1812 at the age of one hundred and forty-six. The last part of the story is based on three articles of Bhai Kahan Singh published in the *Panjābī Bhain* of May 1916 and the *Phulwārī* of March and April 1927. An English summary of Sri Wahmi's book has of late been serialized in an English weekly, the *Indian Progress*, of Delhi.

## 12. BHAI GANGA SINGH'S PRETENTIONS

Before taking up for examination the story of Baba Ajapal Singh as related therein, we may mention the name of one Bhai Ganga Singh of the village of Chhajjal-waddi in the district of Amritsar. He used to call himself an 'Akali' and *Sewak* of the Gurdwara at Rawalsar in the erstwhile state of



Mandi, now in the Himachal Pradesh. This place had once been visited by Guru Gobind Singh. In 1989 Bikrami, A. D. 1932, Bhai Ganga Singh gave out that Guru Gobind Singh had appeared to him in human form—*Zāhira zāhir darshan ditte*—in 1988 Bikrami, A.D. 1931, and had given him a written document with the instruction “to have it printed after *Sammāt* 88 (in *Sammāt* 1989) and distributed in the *Sangat*”. Bhai Ganga Singh, however, did not claim to be Guru Gobind Singh himself but only a Special Messenger—*Khās Nāmā-bardār*—of the Guru. In 1989 Bk., A. D. 1932, he issued a pamphlet *Kalghīdhar dā Zahūr*, printed at the Simla Printing Press, Amritsar. Therein was given a poem written in the style of Guru Gobind Singh, using the *nom de plume* of ‘Nanak’ at the end of every stanza. At the end of the pamphlet there was a *hukam-nāmā* under the name of the Tenth Guru addressed to Bhai Ganga Singh himself desiring him to publish and distribute the document mentioned above. The main sections of the document published by Bhai Ganga Singh were :

*Rawāl Chhand Pātshāhī 10-11;*

*Chitthī Patrikā Pātshāhī 10-11;*

*Sach sunāisī sach kī belā Pātshāhī 10-11;*

*Hukam Nāmā Pātshāhī 10-11.*

And in the second edition of the pamphlet issued in Magh 1989 Bk. (January-February 1933) were added at the end :

*Fārkhātī Gur-Ans Pātshāhī 10-11;*

*Hukam Nāmā sach kī belā Pātshāhī 10-11. [pp. 28-29.]*

The title of the second edition was changed to *Gurū Granth Patshāhī (Das Yārān) 10-11, Kalghīdhar dā Zahūr*.

Thus in the years 1931-33 there were at one and the same time two prophets—one put up by the Kuka publicists on the basis of Baba Ajapal Singh fable, and the other Bhai Ganga Singh who claimed himself to be the *Special Messenger* of Guru Gobind Singh. The story of the *Special Messenger*—*Khās Nāmā-bardār*—, however, came to an abrupt end with his murder.

The story of Baba Ajapal Singh of Nabha first appeared in the *Panjābī Bhain* of Ferozpur for May 1916. It did not carry the name of its author. According to the late Bhai Takht Singh, the founder of the Sikh Kanya-Mahavidhyala of Ferozepore, it was written by Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha. The fact that he, or whoever the author was, did not subscribe his name to it makes it suspect. An anonymous writing will not have much meaning for a student of history.

The other two articles of Bhai Kahan Singh on the subject appeared in the *Phulwārī* of Amritsar for March and April 1927, written at the request of its editor Giani Hira Singh Dard. There is not a word in them to suggest that Bhai Kahan Singh believed in Baba Ajapal Singh being Guru Gobind Singh. To leave his readers in no doubt about his own belief on this point, he tells us in the very beginning of his first article that “nothing is known as to who the illustrious Baba Ajapal Singh was or to which family or place he belonged—ਪਰਮ ਪ੍ਰਤਾਪੀ ਤੇਜ ਪੁੰਜ ਬਾਬਾ ਅਜਾਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਕੌਨ ਸਨ, ਕਿਸ ਵੰਸ਼ ਅਤੇ ਨਗਰ ਵਿਚ ਜਨਮੇ, ਇਸ ਦਾ ਕੁਝ ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ”—[*Itihās de an-likhe patre*, Article I, March 1927, p. 378]. “Whatever story of his my respected father had made me note down many years ago, I am presenting to the readers at the request of Giani Hira Singh Dard.” Nothing also was known about the five Singhs who were nearest to Baba Ajapal Singh [p. 379]. In the beginning of the second article also he says : “Baba Ajapal Singh never narrated his story to anyone. But the people who lived near him—his *nikat-vartī*—believed that Guru Gobind Singh did not die in the Deccan because neither the arms worn by him nor the bones of his body were found after his cremation. His pet horse had also disappeared from the stable, and that the Guru lived in concealment in the Panjab under the name of Ajapal Singh.” [*Phulwārī*, April 1927, p. 461, *Appendix XIV* (a) No. 2.] About his arms, a number of writers have accepted that a *kirpan* was found in the ashes searched after the cremation. The horse could have easily fallen into the hands of some adventurer who might have found a favourable opportunity

to quietly remove it from the stable when the Sikhs were all collected in a mournful mood at the cremation place.

But Bhai Kahan Singh, the writer of the article, was not himself convinced of the truthfulness of the belief of the *nikat-vartī* people of Baba Ajapal Singh. After referring to a couple of conjectures of the *nikat-vartis*, he says : "I have not formed any conclusive opinion on this subject." This clearly means that he was in doubt about the correctness of the story. That is why he mentions the remaining part of the story with a big 'If', saying : I give a summary of the account as noted down from my father's narration, without entering into its refutation or support—*khandan mandan*." [Phulwārī, April 1927, p. 461.] Not only this. According to Bhai Kahan Singh, the story of Baba Ajapal Singh's alleged stay at Jind and Patiala is also unsubstantiated and unacceptable as there is no evidence or convincing proof available to support it—ਪਰ ਕੋਈ ਚਿਨ੍ਹ ਅਥਵਾ ਕੋਈ ਪ੍ਰਬਲ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਲਈ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਿਲਦਾ—[Phulwārī, April 1927, p. 462.]

Bhai Kahan Singh's own belief in this respect is also available to us in his *Gurmat Sudhākar* published in 1912 wherein he says that Baba Ajapal Singh had received *Amrit*, the baptism of a *Singh*, from Guru Gobind Singh and had spent greater part of his life living with him — ਬਾਬਾ ਅਜਾਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਕਲਗੀਧਰ ਸਵਾਮੀ ਤੋਂ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਛਕਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਉਮਰ ਦਾ ਬਡਾ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਪਰਮ ਪਿਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਰਹਿ ਕੇ ਵਿਤਾਯਾ । [Kalā vii-29, p. 217, Appendix XIV (b).]

From the statements of Bhai Kahan Singh, it is clear that Baba Ajapal Singh could not have been Guru Gobind Singh himself.

#### 14. NEO-GURUSHIP DOCTRINE UNTENABLE

Not only this. Bhai Kahan Singh's father, Bhai Narain Singh, who was the only source of information about Baba Ajapal Singh, had told him that Baba Ajapal Singh always referred to his *Guru* in the third person as 'Guru Singh Ji' and thereby meant the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh (*Dasmesh*), occasionally saying, "This is the order of Guru Singh ji", "Guru Singh ji has ordered this", "Guru Singh ji will chastise the evil self-willed. He who will adopt the discipline of Guru



Singh ji will be happy in this world and in the world beyond", etc. [*Vide Appendix XIV (a), No. 1, under bolī, nit dī rīt and updes̄h.*]

In his statement in the *Sikh Sewak*, Amritsar, of October 27, 1933, page 3, Bhai Kahan Singh has recorded that it was clear from his (BKS's) writings that Baba Ajapal Singh acknowledged Guru Gobind Singh as his *Guru* and "It is my firm belief," he continues, "that before his death *Kalghīdhar* (Guru Gobind Singh) had installed *Gurū Granth Sāhib* as *Gurū* and that he had not continued the Guruship by installing any other man on the *Gurū gaddī*, as I have been writing in my books." This was affirmed by him in a later issue of the same journal of October 31, 1933, page 3. In the light of these observations and statements, the story of Baba Ajapal Singh being Guru Gobind Singh preached up by the Namdharis, primarily on the authority of Bhai Kahan Singh, falls to the ground.

It is strange that on this baseless and insecure story the Namdhari publicists like Alam and Chakarvarti, followed by Sri Wahmi, have tried to build up the Guruship of Babas Balak Singh and Ram Singh in succession to Guru Gobind Singh. To them the figurative language and the imaginary fables of poet-biographers came handy for the production of their propaganda literature to cajole their followers. In their devotion, the earlier poets had, in their own way, tried to see and raise Guru Gobind Singh to be a supernatural being, unaffected by the laws of nature. They would not, therefore, let him die like an ordinary human being but would send him straight to heaven bodily, riding a horse, welcomed by the Puranic gods and the previous Sikh Gurus. In this they only followed in the footsteps of ancient mythologists.

The Namdhari scholars, referred to above, have used exclusively the Braj and Panjabi poetry and hagiographical literature. They had a deep-rooted prejudice against Urdu, Persian and English in which most of the historical literature of the Panjab was to be found. To



them these were the languages of the *Malechhas* unworthy of study by the Namdhari *Sants*, and the schools which taught these languages were boycotted by them. The result was that while they were inclined towards poetical imagination and fictional writing, the art of appreciating and writing objective and authentic history—in itself a Semitic art—remained out of their reach. It was difficult for them to differentiate between history and mystery—*itihās* and *mithiās*. In fact, they felt more favourably inclined towards *mithiās* or mythology on which they had been nursed from their early days and which fell in with the specific ends they had in view.

They not only readily accepted the imaginary stories and fables of the *Gur-bilās Pātshāhī Das* (of poet Sukha Singh), the *Gur-partāp Sūraj Granth* (of *Mahā-Kavī* Santokh Singh), the *Pothī Gur-bilās kī* (of *Kavī Bāwā* Sumer Singh), etc., on their face value as historical occurrences but also added to them their own concoctions of Baba Ajapal Singh's visit to Haro or Hazro to invest Baba Balak Singh with Guruship. There is no evidence available to support the theory of Baba Ajapal Singh, much less of Guru Gobind Singh, going to Hazro of a date earlier than the third decade of the present century when the Kuka writers created it out of their own imagination.

While making use of the imaginary and baseless belief of the *Nikat-vartīs* of Baba Ajapal Singh that he was Guru Gobind Singh, the Kuka writers seem to have forgotten that similar beliefs had also been entertained by a number of other people about Sodhi Gulab Rai, Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, Bhai Maharaj Singh, etc., etc., who were said to have been the *avtārs* or incarnations of Guru Gobind Singh. They were all contemporaries of Baba Ajapal Singh, said by the Kukas to be Guru Gobind Singh in disguise. There could be no *avtār* of a living person, nor could there be more than one successor nominated by him to take his place. But here in the case of Guru Gobind Singh there were some half a dozen persons being proclaimed by interested people as his successor-Gurus and two persons as successors of Baba Ajapal Singh—one Baba Sarup Singh mentioned by Bhai

Kahan Singh to have been nominated by him before his death at Nabha, and the other Baba Balak Singh claimed by the Namdharis to have been nominated as Guru at Hazro. On the other hand, as we have already stated more than once, there is overwhelming documentary evidence to establish beyond doubt that the real historical Guru Gobind Singh had died at Nanded in October 1708 and had not nominated anyone of his followers to succeed him as *Gurū* and that he had commanded that after him the holy scripture, the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, should be recognized as the *Gurū*.

The mention of the Guru's disappearance from the burning pyre is only an echo of what has been said by poets Sukha Singh, Santokh Singh, Sumer Singh, etc., in figurative and mythological language in their zeal to raise him to, if not above, the plane of ancient Hindu gods who are mentioned in their books as occasionally appearing for giving *darshan* to their *bhaktas*. This is without doubt a creation of the imagination of poets and cannot be accepted as the real presence. Moreover, historically speaking, there was no occasion or cause for the Guru to go into hiding and thereby desert in a far-off unknown part of the subcontinent, over two thousand kilometers away from the Panjab, his devoted disciples who had faithfully followed him to the Deccan. There is nothing on record to have happened either in his own camp or in that of Emperor Bahadur Shah that could be construed to have driven the Guru to take to dubious methods for secretly disappearing from the scene of his active life. The accounts of eye-witnesses at Nanded like Bhai Nandlal, *Dhadi* Nath Mall and the imperial *waqāi-nigār* (the writer of the *Akbhār-i-Darbār-i-Muallā*) give no support to this theory. And it was unlike Guru Gobind Singh as seen in the light of his open and straightforward life of over four decades. Whatever the gullible believers in miracles and supernatural things may have to say, no objective student of history can give credence to such mythological stories smuggled one after the other into the history of Guru Gobind Singh.

## 15. BHAI KAHAN SINGH'S BELIEFS

It is sometimes alleged that Bhai Kahan Singh used to recant under pressure his controversial statements. This does not apply, at least, to the Baba Ajapal Singh controversy. At no stage did Bhai Kahan Singh ever express it as his own belief that Baba Ajapal Singh was Guru Gobind Singh. Throughout the period from 1912 to 1933 when this question was brought up one way or other, he had been consistent in his belief that Ajapal Singh was only a devoted *Singh* of the Guru from whom he had received the *Amrit* and that he had lived with the Guru for the greater part of his life, that he had never narrated his life-story to anyone and also that before his death Guru Gobind Singh had installed the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* to be the *Gurū* after him. He has, in fact, contradicted the belief of the *nikat-vartis* of Ajapal Singh by saying that nobody knew who the Baba was beyond his receiving *Amrit* from the Guru. He even goes to the extent of saying that no one knew who his five *nikat-varti* Singhs were. With this there is no possibility of the corroboration of their statement and belief, making the confusion about Baba Ajapal Singh worse confounded. Bhai Kahan Singh did not believe the statement of the *nikat-vartīs* of Ajapal Singh and he could not, therefore, form any firm opinion on the subject, as he himself says. [*Phulwārī*, April 1927, p. 461, *Appendix XIV* (a), (b).]

From what I knew of him during the years 1931-38, when I occasionally met him at Amritsar, Baramula and Nabha, I can say with confidence that, like a genuine scholar, he was always open to conviction and he would not unnecessarily take a rigid stand on false prestige. He never considered himself to be infallible. In the 1935 controversy over the birthplace of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, raised by a letter of enquiry published by Mr Edward H. Lincoln, the Deputy Commissioner of Gujranwala, in the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore on September 27, 1935, Bhai Kahan Singh readily accepted the facts of history in favour of Gujranwala against the hearsay statements of the

elders of Badrukhan. [*Civil & Military Gazette*, November 23, 1935; Bhai Kahan Singh's letter of November 4, 1935.]

Under the heading '*Gurū Granth Sāhib*' in his well known book the *Gurmat Martand*, vol. I, p. 411, he refers to the holy book as *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* and tells us on page 415 that the use of the word '*Gurū*' with *Granth Sāhib* began in *Samvat* 1765 Bk. (A.D. 1708) when Guru Gobind Singh invested the *Granth*, the basic scripture of the Sikh faith, with Guruship at Abchnagar (Nanded in the Deccan).

Bhai Kahan Singh has also answered the question of those who at times ask about the volume which was invested with Guruship. He writes on page 415 of the book mentioned above :

We believe that it was that volume which the Tenth Guru had completed at Damdama Sahib after including therein the compositions of the Nineth Guru and which was lost during the Great Holocaust (*Waddā Ghalūghārā*) and of which Baba Dip Singh had previously prepared several copies. But even if no volume was available at the time of the death of the Tenth Guru, could there be any difficulty in the investiture? Was Guru Tegh Bahadur present at Delhi at the time of the death of Guru Har Krishan [who invested Guru Tegh Bahadur with Guruship]? The Guruship could be entrusted by mental contemplation or through Word (of the mouth).

These statements and writings of Bhai Kahan Singh leave no doubt about his belief that

- (i) Guru Gobind Singh did not appoint anyone to succeed him as *Guru*,
- (ii) the Tenth Guru had invested the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* with Guruship,
- (iii) Baba Ajapal Singh was not Guru Gobind Singh but a Sikh of his,
- (iv) Baba Ajapal Singh never told his life-story to anyone,
- (v) nobody knew anything about the identity of Baba Ajapal Singh or of the five Singhs closest to him, and that
- (vi) there is no evidence or proof of Baba Ajapal Singh having at any time visited or lived at Jind, Patialā or Hazro.



In the absence of any mention of Baba Ajapal Singh having ever visited Bhai Balak Singh at Hazro or any other place, the story of the investiture of Balak Singh by Ajapal Singh is evidently a baseless concoction.

The allegation against Bhai Kahan Singh is, therefore, baseless and incorrect. There was no change in his beliefs on the subject under discussion up to the end of his life. His belief about the Guruship of *Gurū Granth Sāhib* was throughout in consistence with the faith and beliefs of all sections and orders of the Sikhs including the Namdharis. As mentioned earlier, it was under the wrongful influence of the schismatic Kuka publicists, Nidhan Singh, Indar Singh, etc., that some of the Kukas recanted their belief in *Gurū Granth Sāhib* in and after the third decade of the present century.

#### 16. BELIEFS OF THE KUKAS

The writings of an important Kuka writer, Bhai Kala Singh Namdhari of Nangal Wadda, district Ludhiana, bear witness to this. His two well known books are the *Singhān Nāmdhārīān dā Shahīd Bilās*, published in 1913, and the *Singhān Nāmdhārīān dā Panth Prakāsh* issued in 1914. In both of these books, Bhai Kala Singh remembers the holy Sikh scripture with deep reverence as *Gurū Granth*. In the invocatory verses of the *Shahīd Bilās* the author, in keeping with the tradition of the earlier poets, offers his adoration to the *Gurū Granth* and the *Gurū Panth* along with the other Gurus and says that the great Guru had invested the *Gurū Granth* with his own form and spirit and had thus helped (his disciples) cross the ocean (of the world) [pp. 2, 3]. Referring to the instructions given by Baba Ram Singh to his missionary *sūbās*, Bhai Kala Singh says that he had laid special stress on the worship of the *Gurū Granth jī*, to the exclusion of the Hindu gods and scriptures :

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਆਖਦੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਏ ਦਸਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੈ  
ਜੇਹੜਾ ਅਸਾਂ ਨੇ ਆਖ ਸੁਣਾਇਆ ਹੈ ।  
ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਦੇਖ ਲੈਣਾ  
ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਿਆ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖਾਇਆ ਹੈ ॥... [p. 6]

ਰਾਮ ਕਿਸ਼ਨ ਤੇ ਬਿਸ਼ਨ ਗਣੇਸ਼ ਆਦਿਕ  
 ਛੱਡੇ ਵੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਦੀ ਕਾਰ ਵਾਰੀ ।  
 ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਬਾਝ ਨਾ ਹੋਰ ਪੂਜਣ  
 ਇਹ ਹੁਕਮ ਸਾਡਾ ਵਾਰ ਵਾਰ ਵਾਰੀ ॥... [p. 5]  
 ਛੱਡੇ ਵੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਸਾਰੇ  
 ਪਾਠ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕਰਾਇਆ ਹੈ ।  
 ਰਾਮ ਕਿਸ਼ਨ ਤੇ ਬਿਸ਼ਨ ਗਣੇਸ਼ ਆਦਿਕ  
 ਨਾਮ ਭੁੱਲ ਕੇ ਨਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਹੈ ।... [pp. 8-9.]

The Satguru said : Whatever I have said is the commandment of the Ten (Gurus).

You may verify it by studying the *Gurū Granth*. It is written in the *rahit-nāmās* [p. 6].

Abandon the practices inculcated by Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Ganesha, etc., and by the *Vedas* and the *Purānas*.

Our commandment is that there is nothing worshipful other than *Gurū Granth ji* [p. 5].

The *Vedas*, the holy books and the *Purānas* have all been abandoned. The *Gurū Granth* alone is recited [pp. 8-9].

The names of Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Ganesha, etc., are not at all meditated on [pp. 8-9].

The same reverence and devotion are also reflected in the pages of his *Panth Prakāsh*, 2, 7, 8, 35 and 153-54. Referring to the unhappy opposition of the priests of the Akal Takht and Shri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar to the ways of the Kukas, Bhai Kala Singh gives expression to the views and feelings of Baba Ram Singh saying that his followers were not 'his' *Panth* but were the *Khālsā Panth* of the Master (*Wāhigurū*, God) created by the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh. As for Baba Ram Singh himself, he (Baba Ram Singh) is stated to have said : "I am not *Gurū*, know me to be a slave of the Gurus. I am but a servant of the *Gurū-Shabda*—(the Master Word)"—the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. [p. 38.]

Bhai Kala Singh, the poet author, has also introduced some imaginary matter in his books. He tells us that,

in response to the prayer of the Kukas in jails sentenced to death for the murders of butchers, the Gurus and a number of Sikh martyrs of the eighteenth century appeared to them in their last moments. But they were visible only to the Kukas and to nobody else. There is, however, a difference in the appearance of the imaginary Guru Gobind Singh to the Maratha dacoits imprisoned in the fort of Satara and to these Kukas in the Panjab jails. While the spirit of the Guru had rescued the dacoits from the fort and had flown them off to a place of safety in the Vindhya mountain over two hundred and eighty miles away to the north, those who appeared to the Kukas only blessed them and then left them to their fate at the hands of the hangmen. [*Shahīd Bilās*, 50-51; *Panth Prakāsh*, 86.]

#### 17. BABA AJAPAL SINGH WAS NOT GURU GOBIND SINGH

No objective student of history, who has studied the life of Guru Gobind Singh in some detail, can be persuaded to believe that an insensitive Sannyasi-like ascetic living in a jungle, away from his people and dead to all feelings of human sympathy for his countrymen, as Baba Ajapal Singh is described to be, could be Guru Gobind Singh. Within two years and a quarter of the death of Guru Gobind Singh in October 1708, the infuriated Mughal emperor issued on December 10, 1710, an edict for a wholesale massacre of the Sikhs wherever found—*Nānak-prastān rā har jā kih bayāband ba-qatl rasānand* [*Akbārāt-i-Darbār-i-Muallā*]. The Sikhs were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Mughals and were besieged at Gurdas Nangal for eight long months (April-December 1715), reduced to extremities, with nothing to eat except leaves and skin of trees, but 'Ajapal Singh' was not moved to go to their help. In March 1716, the Sikhs were executed at Delhi at the rate of a hundred a day (March 5-13) and on June 9 Banda Singh and his leading companions were led out for execution near the mausoleum of Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiar Kaki where his flesh was torn with red hot pincers and he was cut to pieces limb by limb. His four year old son and other Sikhs were tortured to death. But 'Ajapal Singh'

remained unmoved in his slumbering *samādhī*. The old order of a general indiscriminate massacre of the Sikhs was repeated during the reign of Emperor Farrukh Siyar (1712-1719) and for thirty-six years thereafter the Sikhs were hounded out of their homes and hearths to seek shelter in jungles, hills and sandy deserts and were executed in their hundreds and thousands during the governorships of Abdus Samad Khan, Zakariya Khan, Yahiya Khan and Mir Mannu when neither saint nor scholar, neither woman nor child, was spared. But Baba 'Ajapal Singh' did not stir out of his hiding to make his existence felt. This was certainly not in keeping with the character, spirit and tradition of Guru Gobind Singh.

In 1757-62, the Darbar Sahib temple at Amritsar was sacked and demolished, and the sacred tank was filled with its debris and with the dead bodies of men and animals. In February 1762, the Durrani led a devastating attack against the Sikhs who lost over ten thousand lives, including old men, women and children, in the *Waddā Ghalūghārā* on February 5. Baba 'Ajapal Singh', however, remained hidden in the jungle of Nabha and did not raise even his little finger for the protection of his people. Could indifference and callousness go any further? Could such a spiritless man be Guru Gobind Singh? This kind of attitude was clearly against the spirit and mission of the Guru's life dedicated to the service of the suffering humanity and the succour of injured innocence. It was wholly inconsistent with the years of his life which history records. The Guru could not have sat in silence while his people groaned under the heel of oppression. He would not have remained in anonymity when the struggle against oppression he had himself started had grown in intensity and had reached such a crucial point. To imagine that in those stirring times Guru Gobind Singh, who had lived so fully and vigorously, would have sought the safety of withdrawal and, abjuring his mission, passed his days like a *maunī* ascetic unconcerned about the fate of his Sikhs, unmoved by cataclysmic events and unmindful of the great destiny towards which the movement he himself had initiated was advancing, would be to



completely misread and misrepresent his character.

The tide turned in favour of the Sikhs after 1763. They inflicted a signal defeat on the Durrani at Sirhind on January 14, 1764, the third anniversary of the third battle of Panipat, and became masters of practically the whole of Malwa. A year and a quarter later, on April 17, 1765, they conquered Lahore, the capital of the Panjab, and established themselves as its rulers, followed by an independent sovereign state of the Panjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This was the time when the Panjab had been freed from the foreign yoke and the Sikh rule was fast expanding. The Sikh armies were then invincible with a strong cavalry possessing choicest of horses, both in the *Fauj-i-āin* and in the Irregular Horse, popularly known as the *Khulhe Ghor-charhe*. There seems little point in any Sikh Sardar or soldier, much less Baba 'Ajapal Singh', living in disguise and accepting effigies of horses as offerings and playing with mud-toys.

Guru Gobind Singh, we all know, believed in an effortful life of fearless action, and his prayer to the Almighty God was :

Grant me this boon, O Lord, that  
I may not falter in doing good deeds.  
I should have no fear of the enemy  
when I go to battle. ...

And when the time comes,

I should die fighting in the field of action.

[*Chandī Ch. Ukt-bilās, No. 231.*]

Did Baba 'Ajapal Singh' live up to this ideal and prayer of Guru Gobind Singh ? Guru Gobind Singh, we know, went to the help of the Hindu Rajput Rajas, his enemies in the Shivalak Hills, when they were harassed by the Mughal forces. He also helped the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah in the battle of succession at Jajau on June 8, 1707, against his usurping brother Muhammad Azam in spite of the fact that the Emperor's father, grandfather and great grandfather, had for generations persecuted the Sikhs and had ordered the execution of the Guru's father and great grandfather, Guru

Tegh Bahadur and Guru Arjun. Baba 'Ajapal Singh,' however, would not move out of his hidden recess while his own people were being persecuted and executed in their hundreds and thousands for over half a century (1708-62). While Guru Gobind Singh was not deterred from doing good deeds to the worst of his enemies in distress and was prepared to lay down his life in the field of action in their defence, Baba 'Ajapal Singh' preferred to lead the quiet life of an inert ascetic in disguise without exerting himself in defence of his suffering countrymen and in support of his struggling brethren. This attitude of Baba 'Ajapal Singh' towards life was far different from that of Guru Gobind Singh as anyone can see. In some thirty-three years of his active life—out of forty-two in all (1666-1708 A.D.)—the Guru had made an everlasting impact on the history of India in creating his dynamic *Khalsa* and in shaking to its very foundation the greatest empire of his day, the Great Mughal Empire. Baba 'Ajapal Singh', on the other hand, with over a century (1708-1812) to his credit, was hardly known to anyone beyond the narrow circle of the family of his successor *Mahant* Baba Sarup Singh of Nabha up to 1916—for one hundred and four years after his death in 1812—when his name was surreptitiously introduced into history through an anonymous article published in the *Panjābi Bhain* of Ferozpur for May 1916. His name was not known even to the family of *Sāin Sāhib* Bhai Jawhir Mall (d. August 19, 1865), to his disciple Baba Balak Singh (d. December 2, 1862) or to Baba Ram Singh, the founding fathers of the Namdhari movement which now traces its birth to Baba Ajapal Singh. The originators of this Ajapal Singh myth have not been able to go beyond 1916 for tracing the relation of the Namdhari movement with Baba Ajapal Singh because there is no mention of him, even by implication, in any book of history written up to the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century. Even the hagiographical works of poets Sukha Singh, Santokh Singh, Sumer Singh, Gian Singh, etc., whose imaginary mythological stories are the basis of the the Namdhari conjectures, make no mention of

Ajapal Singh. The books of Bhai Kala Singh Namadhari published in 1913 and 1914, mentioned earlier, say nothing about him. This goes to establish beyond doubt that Baba Ajapal Singh, if ever such a person lived, had no connection whatever, other than that of a Sikh, with Guru Gobind Singh, with Baba Balak Singh or Baba Ram Singh. To say that he was Guru Gobind Singh himself is, to say the least, fanciful.

This also knocks out all ground from under the fable that Guru Gobind Singh did not die at Nanded in October 1708 but disappeared in disguise and lived for over a hundred years thereafter in the Panjab under the assumed name of Ajapal Singh. The nomination of Baba Balak Singh as Guru by Ajapal Singh is also a baseless fiction created by the Namdhari publicists in the nineteen-twenties, some sixty-five years after the death of Baba Balak Singh (December 2, 1862), who had his *Gur-mantra* from Sain Jawahir Mall, whose descendants and relatives had no knowledge whatever of Baba Ajapal Singh having any connection either with Sain Sahib or his disciple Baba Balak Singh. Baba Ram Singh, as we know, was one of the three leading disciples of Baba Balak Singh, the other two being Bhai Kahan Singh of Hazro and Bhai Lal Singh of Amritsar. They too knew nothing about Baba Ajapal Singh.

Historically speaking, therefore, the Namdhari movement owes its origin to Sain Sahib Jawahir Mall and Baba Balak Singh, and not, by any stretch of imagination, to Baba Ajapal Singh of Nabha whose identification with Guru Gobind Singh and relationship with Baba Balak Singh are pure fiction of recent creation which cannot be accepted as historical truth by serious and objective students of history.

May Truth enlighten the minds of men and Honesty guide their actions !

## APPENDIX XIX

**Statement of the Secretary Goadateer Itihas  
Samshodhan Mandal, Nanded**

My attention has been drawn to a series of articles on '*Guru Govind Singh did not die at Nanded*' published in the weekly *Indian Progress* of Delhi, March-October, 1971. The editor seems to be grossly misinformed on the subject. It is an acknowledged historical fact that Guru Govind Singh, the Tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs, died at Nanded in the first week of October, 1708 (Katik Sudi 5, 1765 Bikrami). It was here that he proclaimed that, with his death, the line of personal succession to Guruship would end and that in future the Sikh holy book would be the *Guru*. These facts are recited in the Sikh prayer at the Sachkhand temple here, as also everywhere else. It was to perpetuate the memory of Guru Govind Singh here at Nanded that in the early nineteenth century Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent men and money all the way from the Punjab to raise the present monumental building over the relics of the great Guru. Not only the Sikhs from all over the world but also large numbers of Hindus and Muslims visit this place daily. To say that Guru Govind Singh did not die at Nanded is a misrepresentation of an historical fact which is well-known to all Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the town and its neighbourhood. It is true that there is a legend of the Guru having given *darshan* to a Sadhu after his death. Such legends are found in the hagiographical books of all religions, Hindu, Muslim and Christian. But these legends are not to be accepted as part of the historical biographies of the saints.

23rd October, 1971.

(Sd.) V. A. Kanole,  
Hony Secretary,  
Godateer Itihas Samshodhak Mandal,  
Nanded, Maharashtra



## APPENDIX XXI

**Baba Ajapal Singh and his Successors****1. Baba Ajapal Singh**

Date and place of his birth not known

Came to Nabha, 1830 Bk., 1773 A.D.

Died at Nabha, Jeth Sudi 5, 1869 Bk., June 14, 1812.

**2. Baba Sarup Singh (Mahant)**

Born, Pitho, Chet Sudi 9, 1840 Bk., April 11, 1783.

Succeeded Ajapal Singh, 1812 A.D.

Died at Nabha, Harh Vadi 7, 1918 Bk., June 29, 1861.

(Gurdial Singh son of Sarup Singh)

born, 1865 Bk., 1808 A.D.

died, 1903 Bk., 1846 A.D.

**3. Bhai Narain Singh son of Gurdial Singh**

Born, Sawan Sudi 10 1898 Bk., July 28, 1841 A.D.

Succeeded Baba Sarup Singh, 1918 Bk., 1861 A.D.

Died, Baisakh 20, 1973 Bk., May 1, 1916.

**4. Bhai Bishan Singh son of Narain Singh**

Born, 1930 Bk., 1873 A.D.

Succeeded Bhai Narain Singh, 1916 A.D.

Maghar, 13, 1993, Bk., November 27, 1936.

(Bhai Kahan Singh son of Bhai Narain Singh)

Born, 1918 Bk., 1861 A.D.

Died, November 23, 1938.

**5. Bhai Bhagwant Singh 'Hariji' son of Bhai Kahan Singh**

Born 1948 Bk., 1891 A.D.

Succeeded Bhai Bishan Singh as Mahant, 1936.

Died Assuj 24, 2025 Bk., October 9, 1968.

## APPENDIX XXII

## Founders and Leaders of the (Kuka) Namdhari Movement

### 1. **Sain Jawahir Mall of Rawalpindi**

(Spiritual preceptor of Bhai Balak Singh)  
died August 19, 1865.

### 2. **Bhai Balak Singh of Hazro**

(Founder of Jagiasi-Abhiasi Namdhari or Kuka Sect).  
Born 1841 Bk., 1784 A.D. (?)  
died Maghar 19, 1919 Bk., December 2, 1862 A.D.

### **Bhai Balak Singh's prominent disciples**

1. Bhai Kahan Singh of Hazro
2. Bhai Lal Singh of Amritsar
3. Bhai Ram Singh of Bhaini

### 3. **Baba Ram Singh**

Born, Bhaini, Magh Sudi 5, 1872 Bk., February 3, 1816.  
Death in exile in Burma, November 1884.

### 4. **Baba Hari Singh *alias* Budh Singh**

Died, Jeth Vadi 10, 1963 Bk., May 17, 1906 A.D.

### 5. **Baba Partap Singh son of Baba Hari Singh**

Born, Chet Sudi 3, 1946 Bk., April 3, 1889 A.D.  
Succeeded his father Baba Hari Singh, 1906 A.D.  
Died, August (midnight) 21-22, 1959.

### 6. **Baba Jagjit Singh son of Baba Partap Singh**

Succeeded his father Baba Partap Singh, August 1959.

## CHRONOLOGY

1666 December 22 — (Poh Sudi 7, 1723 Bk.) — Guru Gobind Singh born at Patna.

1699 March 30 -- (Baisakhi day) — Guru Gobind Singh instituted the *Amrit* ceremony and created the *Khalsa*.

1706 October — Guru Gobind Singh set out for the Deccan to see Emperor Aurangzeb.

1707 June 8 — Guru Gobind Singh helped Bahadur Shah in the battle of Jajau.

July 23 — Emperor Bahadur Shah received Guru Gobind Singh in a public darbar at Agra.

October 2 — Guru Gobind Singh wrote to the *Sangat* of Dhaul, referring to his reception by the Emperor and to his intention to return to the Panjab.

1708 August — Guru Gobind Singh arrived at Nanded in the last week.

September 3 — Guru Gobind Singh visited the hermitage of Madho Das on the solar-eclipse day, and later converted him to his faith as Banda Singh.

October 6-7 — (Katik Sudi 5, 1765 Bk.)—

Guru Gobind Singh died (at night) and cremated at Nanded.

7—(Morning) Bahadur Shah crossed the Godavri to quell the rebellion of his brother Kam Bakhsh.

28—Emperor ordered the grant of a *khilat* to the son of Jamshed Khan.

30—Emperor ordered the grant of a mourning *khilat* to Ajit Singh, the adopted son of Mata Sundri, recorded as the son of the late Guru Gobind Singh.

October 7-30 — Nath Mall's *Amar Nama* composed within three weeks of the Guru's death.

November 11 — Emperor Bahadur Shah ordered his officials not to interfere with the property of the late Guru Gobind Singh.

- 1709 (Summer)—Battle of Amritsar between the Panjab provincial forces and the Sikhs of Amritsar and its neighbourhood.
- 1710 December 10 — Emperor Bahadur Shah ordered an indiscriminate massacre of the Sikhs wherever found.
- 1711 June 1—Ajit Singh saw Emperor Bahadur Shah.  
December 30 — Emperor Bahadur Shah ordered the restoration to Ajit Singh of the confiscated Sikh lands of Amritsar.  
Sainapat completed his *Sri Gur-sobha* (vide Sumer Singh's *Pothi*, p. 713).
- 1712 — Bhai Nandlal completed the revision of his *Rahit Nama*—begun in 1695.  
February 17-18 — Emperor Bahadur Shah died at Lahore.
- 1715 April-December — Siege of Gurdas-Nangal.
- 1716 March-June — Sikhs executed at Delhi at the rate of 100 a day (March 5-13)  
—Banda Singh and his companions executed (June 9).
- 1717-18 — *Gur-bilas Patshahi Chevin* of poet' Sohan begun, completed on July 22, 1718 (Sawan 22 Sudi 5, 1875).
- 1719 — *Ibrat Namah* or the *Swaneh* of Mirza Muhammad Harisi beginning with 1715, ends with 1719.
- 1722 — *Ibrat Namah* of Sayyed Muhammad Qasim Husaini Lahauri.
- 1731 — *Ibrat Maqal* by Muhammad Qasim Husaini Lahauri.
- 1734 June 24 — (1791 Bk.)—Bhai Mani Singh hacked to pieces limb by limb at Lahore.
- 1741 — (1798 Bk.)—*Parchian Sewa Das* (Lahore manuscript) written.
- 1751 — (1808 Bk.) *Gur-bilas Patshahi Das* completed by Koer Singh.
- 1754 — Bhai Kahan Singh's ancestors knew nothing about Ajapal Singh's life before 1811 Bk. (A.D. 1754).
- 1756 — Baba Sahib Singh Bedi of Una born—died 1834.
- 1759 — Rai Chatarman's *Chahar Gulshan* completed.
- 1762 February 5 — Wadda Ghalughara.
- 1769-70 — (1826 Bk.)—Kesar Singh Chhibbar completed his



*Bansavali Nama Dasan Patshahian ka.*

- 1764 January 14 — The Sikhs conquered Sirhind.
- 1765 April 17 — The Sikhs conquered Lahore.
- 1773 — (1830 Bk.)—Baba Ajapal said to have come to Nabha.
- 1774 — (1831 Bk.)—*Mehma Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla written (according to Sumer Singh's *Pothi Gur-bilas*).
- 1780 — (1837 Bk.)—Baba Sahib Singh received *Khande di Pahul* at Dera Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur.
- 1783 April 11—Baba Sarup Singh of Nabha born at Pitho.  
— Letter No. XI of George Forster in *A Journey from Bengal to England* (pub. 1788).
- 1784 — (1841 Bk.)—Bhai Balak Singh born.
- 1797 — (1854 Bk.)—*Gur-bilas Patshahi Das* completed by Sukha Singh.
- 1799 — *Majma-ul-Akhbar* by Harsukh Rai.
- 1808 — (1865 Bk.)—Bhai Gurdial Singh son of Sarup Singh of Nabha born.
- 1810 — *Tarikh-i-Muzaffari* by Muhammad Ali Ansari.  
— *Mirat-i-Ahwal-i-Jahan Numa* by Ahmad bin Muhammad Ali.
- 1811 — *Tarikh-i-Sikhan* by Khushwaqt Rai.
- 1812, June 14 — (Jeth Sudi 5, 1869 Bk.)—Baba Ajapal Singh died at Nabha — Baba Sarup Singh succeeded him.
- 1817-18 — (1233 A.H.)—Ahmed Shah Batalia's *Tawarikh-i-Hind*.
- 1816 February 3—(Magh Sudi 5, 1872 Bk.)—Baba Ram Singh Namdhari born at Bhaini.
- 1828 — *Singh Sagar* of Bir Singh Ball completed.
- 1841 July 28 — (Sawan Sudi 10, 1898 Bk.)—Bhai Narain Singh son of Gurdial Singh, son of Baba Sarup Singh, born.  
— *Prachin Panth Prakash* of Bhangu Rattan Singh completed
- 1843 — *Gur-pratap Suraj Granth* of Bhai Santokh Singh completed.
- 1846 — (1903 Bk.)—Bhai Gurdial Singh son of Sarup Singh died.
- 1848 — Bute Shah's *Tawarikh-i-Panjab* completed.

- 1849 December 28 — Bhai Maharaj Singh arrested.  
     — *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* by Sohan Lal Suri completed,  
     pub. 1885.
- 1854 — *Ibrat Namah* of Mufti Ali-ud-din.
- 1856 July 5 — Bhai Maharaj Singh died in exile at Singapore.
- 1861 June 29 — (Harh Vadi 7, 1918 Bk.)—Baba Sarup Singh  
     died at Nabha, succeeded by Bhai Narain Singh.  
     — Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha born.
- 1862 December 1 — (Maghar 18, 1918 Bk.)—Baba Balak Singh  
     wrote a letter to Sain Jawahir Mall.  
     December 2 — (Maghar 19, 1918 Bk.) Baba Balak Singh  
     died at Hazro.
- 1865 May — Munshi Sant Singh wrote his *Bayan-i-Khandan-i-  
     Karamat Nishān-i-Bedian*.  
     August 19 — Sain Jawahir Mall died at Rawalpindi.
- 1869 September 20 — Shauqa Ram wrote his *Pothi Sardha  
     Puran — Siharfi Bhai Balak Singh*, pub. 1969.
- 1871 September 21 — Statement of Giani Ratan Singh regard-  
     ing Harnam Singh's pretensions.
- 1872 January — Kukas murdered butchers at Malerkotla,  
     —blown away from the guns—Baba Ram Singh deported.
- 1872-84—Baba Ram Singh wrote his letters (*Ardas, Hukm-  
     name*) during his exile in Burma.
- 1873 — (1903 Bk.)—Bhai Bishan Singh son of Bhai Narain  
     Singh of Nabha born.  
     Bawa Sumer Singh of Patna completed his *Pothi  
     Gur-bilas Patshahi Das ki*, published in 1939 Bk.,  
     A.D. 1882.
- 1876 — *Zafar-Namah-i-Ranjit Singh* by Kanhaiya Lal Hindi,  
     published.
- 1884 November — Baba Ram Singh died in exile.
- 1889 April 3 — (Chet Sudi 3, 1946 Bk.)—Baba Partap Singh  
     Namdhari born at Bhaini.  
     — Giani Gian Singh published his *Panth Prakash*  
     (1889), (Sixth edition, October 1923).
- 1891 — Bhai Bhagwant Singh 'Hariji' born at Nabha.
- 1891 — *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa* of Giani Gian Singh published.

- 1902 October 30 — Chief Khalsa Diwan established at Amritsar.
- 1906 May 17 — (Jeth Vadi 10, 1963 Bk.)—Baba Hari Singh Namdhari died, succeeded by Baba Partap Singh.
- 1912 — *Gurmat Sudhakar* of Bhai Kahan Singh published.
- 1913 — *Singhan Namdharian da Shahid-bilas* of Kala Singh Namdhari published.
- 1914 — *Singhan Namdharian da Panth Prakash* of Kala Singh Namdhari published.
- 1916 May 1 — (Baisakh 20, 1973 Bk.)—Bhai Narain Singh of Nabha died, succeeded by Bhai Bishan Singh,  
May—Article published in the *Panjabi Bhain* of Ferozepore regarding Baba Ajapal Singh.
- 1917 — Bhagat Narain Das died.
- 1922 — *Gurmat Prabhakar* of Bhai Kahan Singh published.
- 1927 March, April—Bhai Kahan Singh's articles *Itihas de an-like Patre* regarding Baba Ajapal Singh published in the 'Phulwari' of Amritsar.
- 1928 February 18—News published in the 'Asli Qaumi Dard' of Amritsar regarding confiscation by the Government of the Punjab of the fictitious picture printed by the Kukas at the F.W. Press, Ramgali, Lahore, showing Guru Gobind Singh as bestowing Guruship on Bhai Balak Singh.
- 1932 — (1989 Bk.) — Bhai Ganga Singh claimed to be a *Khas Nama-bardar* of Guru Gobind Singh —he issued a pamphlet *Kalghidhar da Zahur*, second edition issued in 1933.
- 1934 — (1991 Bk.) — *Namdhari Itihas*, part I, by Indar Singh Chakarvarti, published.
- 1935 March-May — Notes of Bhagat Lakshman Singh regarding Sain Jawahir Mall, Bhai Balak Singh, Baba Ajapal Singh, Baba Ram Singh, etc., written.  
—later published in the *Jiwan Priti* for August 1961.
- September 27  
November 23 ] — *C.&M. Gazette*, Lahore, Letters of Edward H. Lincoln, Ganda Singh, and Bhai Kahan Singh

regarding the birth-place of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

1936 November 27 — (Maghar 13, 1993 Bk.)—Bhai Bishan Singh of Nabha died, succeeded by Bhai Bhagwant Singh 'Hariji'.

1938 November 23 — Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha died.

1940 August 1, December 5 — Articles of Sardar Narotam Singh, Barrister, regarding Sain Jawahir Mall, Bhai Balak Singh, Baba Ram Singh, Baba Ajapal Singh, etc., published in the *Khalsa Samachar* of Amritsar.

1959 August 21-22 — Baba Partap Singh Namdhari died, succeeded by his son Baba Jagjit Singh.

1962 — *Gurmat Martand* of Bhai Kahan Singh published.

1968 October 9 — (Assuj 24, 2025 Bk.)—Bhai Bhagwant Singh 'Hariji' died.

1971 October 10 — Prof. Ganesh H. Khare's letter saying that there is no evidence available in Maratha history regarding the fable of Janwara brothers having been flown away from the Satara fort by the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh.

October 23 — Statement of the Secretary, Godateer Itihas Samshodhan Mandal, Nanded, regarding Guru Gobind Singh's death at Nanded being a historical fact.

October 27 — Statement of the *Panj Piaras* of Takht Sachkhand Shri Hazur Sahib Abchalnagar, Nanded.

October 27 — Statement of the Secretary, Gurdwara Board, Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib Abchalnagar, Nanded.



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